

St Stephen's CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119358
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339419
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Roebuck
Headteacher	Mr David Sharkey
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent two thirds of their time looking at learning and visited 20 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors observed 11 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 92 questionnaires were received from parents and carers and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of strategies introduced to deal with the identified underachievement of some pupils
- whether teachers use assessment information consistently to challenge pupils of different abilities
- the extent to which the outdoor area for children in the Reception class is used to support their learning
- whether governors are influential in promoting school improvement.

Information about the school

This larger than average school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in nursery and Reception classes. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is high and many of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is well above average. The after-school club is inspected separately. A number of awards have been gained by the school including the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Racial Equality Mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The headteacher has been the driving force behind the good improvement made since the last inspection. This includes improved progress by pupils, better quality teaching and learning and more rigorous leadership and management. Leaders at all levels carry out their responsibilities diligently and a strong team ethos is evident. Outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity and community cohesion means the school is a very harmonious setting in which to learn. This has led to the school gaining the Racial Equality Mark. Accurate self-evaluation ensures that leaders and governors have a clear picture and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders use this information to plan what the school needs to do to improve further and have been successful in sustaining improvements. Management systems run smoothly and the school's capacity for improvement is good.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start to their education and achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress and attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement from their low skill levels on entering school.

Pupils do not have an extensive mathematical vocabulary and this hinders their ability to discuss and reason how to solve practical number problems. Progress in reading is limited at times because guided reading sessions do not always focus on what pupils need to do to improve. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the use of the outdoor area for children in the Reception class does not fully support their learning. Leaders are not complacent and are keen to build upon pupils' good achievement. They are committed to making learning more personalised by refining teachers' skills in identifying the specific next steps needed to further individual pupils' development.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral and social development means they are very polite and well behaved, showing great respect for the different traditions and beliefs of the wide range of minority ethnic groups represented in the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their activities, which contributes to the good progress they make. A wide range of enrichment activities add interest and variety to the curriculum. The care and well-being of pupils is central to the school's work and this is much appreciated by parents and carers. Pupils say they are looked after well and feel safe and secure in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, particularly in reading and mathematics, by:

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- ensuring that guided reading sessions consistently focus on what pupils need to do to improve
 - improving pupils' ability to solve practical mathematical problems by extending their mathematical vocabulary and reasoning skills.
 - Build on pupils' good achievement by refining teachers' skills in identifying the specific next steps needed to further pupils' learning.
- Develop the use of the outdoor area for children in the Reception class to better support their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are interested in their work and maintain concentration for lengthy periods. They are keen to do well and particularly enjoy practical activities. This was evident when pupils in Year 6 were carrying out a scientific investigation into what happens to different substances when placed in water. Pupils have satisfactory writing skills and enjoy reading. They speak confidently in group and class discussions. They have secure mathematical calculation skills but are less adept at discussing and reasoning how to solve real-life number problems. They competently use information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects. There is no significant difference between the achievements of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive.

Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and are very kind and considerate towards others. They engage very effectively with those from different ethnic backgrounds and understand they share common values. Pupils contribute well to school life by willingly taking on responsibilities, including being a member of the school council. They make a good contribution to the wider community, such as by raising funds for local charities and distributing harvest produce to nearby residents and the local centres for homeless people. Most pupils have adopted a healthy lifestyle and talk enthusiastically about the need to take regular exercise and eat a balanced diet. The good progress pupils make in gaining literacy and numeracy skills and their improving attendance means they are well prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers provide activities that build on well from previous work, so pupils can use what they already know to support their current learning. Assessment information is used consistently to set challenging work for groups of pupils of different abilities. Teaching ensures that pupils are engaged in their work and little time is lost. Classrooms are managed well, so they are calm and friendly places in which to learn. Pupils are given opportunity to explore ideas for themselves, which makes a positive contribution to their development as independent learners. Planning for guided reading sessions does not always focus on what pupils need to do to improve. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The curriculum provides well-organised and imaginative opportunities for learning and experiences that contribute well to pupils' well-being and development. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, gardening and music clubs, enrich the curriculum. Partnership activity involving environmental workshops has led to the school achieving eco-status. Visits to places of educational interest, such as the local archives office, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. The school's commitment to providing a variety of good quality-sporting experiences is reflected in it gaining the Activemark. The programme for personal development contributes well to pupils' good progress in this aspect of their learning.

The school provides a safe learning environment for individuals and groups of pupils. Rigorous child protection arrangements ensure that staff know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Thorough risk assessments are in

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place for activities in and around school and on visits. Smooth transition arrangements throughout the school and on to secondary school contribute to pupils' well-being and development. Targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils plays an important role in fostering their learning and development. Good links with outside agencies ensure that extra support for individual pupils is available if required. Attendance is improving because of action taken by leaders, which has resulted in a sharp decline in persistent absenteeism.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders establish ambition and drive improvement well by focusing the school on priorities. They spur the enthusiasm of staff and direct their efforts to good effect. Leaders make good use of a variety of rigorous monitoring activities to ensure that planning is based on good-quality data. Target setting is realistic and challenging and contributes to good outcomes. The governing body is supportive of the school and influential in guiding its strategic development. The school places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of its work. There is no evidence of discrimination and where there has been any inequality, this has been tackled exceptionally well. This is shown in the way effective intervention strategies have been put into place, to ensure that pupils identified as underachieving in literacy and numeracy achieve as well as other groups of pupils. All safeguarding requirements are met and arrangements are regularly reviewed. Governors and staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and they receive regular training on safeguarding, in particular child protection. Leaders' actions have a markedly beneficial impact on community cohesion within the local community and beyond. They evaluate the school's work rigorously to build on its many strengths and, as a result, the school is a highly cohesive community. The school has a good relationship with most groups of parents and carers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction arrangements enable children to quickly settle into everyday routines. Consistently good-quality teaching and learning means they make good progress and achieve well across all areas of learning. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of children of this age and work well as a team to make sure they are met. Relationships between adults and children are good, which has a positive impact on the progress children make. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves and this makes a good contribution to their development as independent learners. They are keen to learn and show a lot of enjoyment in their activities, as was seen in their role play in the area set up as a garden centre. Children cooperate well in pairs and small groups, taking turns and sharing fairly. The outdoor area for children in the Reception class does not provide a stimulating setting in which to learn and play. It is not used effectively to promote children's development across the areas of learning throughout the day. Good leadership ensures that assessment information is used effectively to set tasks that are interesting and matched to children's individual abilities. Good-quality care places strong emphasis on children's well-being. Partnership with parents and carers is good and they appreciate the way they are kept fully informed about the progress their children make.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical of many, 'The teaching staff are very committed and enthusiastic and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities,' and, 'My child enjoys his day at school and is always looking forward to a new lesson in class.' A very small minority did not agree that the school is led and managed effectively. Inspectors judge leadership and management of the school to be good. A few parents and carers indicated the school did not make sure their children were well prepared for the future. Inspection evidence does not support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephen's C of E School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 249 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	56	36	40	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	62	32	35	0	0	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	48	43	47	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	47	46	51	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	52	41	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	51	44	48	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	43	47	52	2	2	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	37	41	44	48	3	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	42	50	55	0	0	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	46	44	48	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	41	49	54	0	0	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	50	55	34	37	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	65	29	32	0	0	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's C of E School, Preston, PR1 8JN

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do. Yours is a good school that helps you make good progress and achieve well.

This is what we found out about your school.

- Your behaviour is good and you get on really well with each other.
- There are lots of extra-curricular activities for you to take part in.
- You enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe in and around school and on trips.
- In your questionnaires you say the school helps you to be healthy and that you learn a lot in lessons.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

This is what we have asked your school to do now.

- Improve your reading skills and your ability to solve mathematical problems.
- Build on your good achievement so you can do even better.
- Make better use of the outdoor area for children in the Reception class, to support their learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Mr Melvyn Hemmings

Lead Inspector

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