

St Stephen's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124084
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340489
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Kath Campbell

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Haywood
Headteacher	Rob Davies
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including responses to 83 parental/carer and 90 pupil questionnaires.

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

- why standards in mathematics improved in 2009, and what the school is doing to improve the performance of boys and more able pupils in writing and mathematics
- whether the quality of teaching is consistent, and how well teachers are tracking pupils' progress
- whether the curriculum is interesting enough to motivate pupils, particularly boys, and how pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
- whether the school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance are sufficiently effective.

Information about the school

This is a small school that serves a rural community on the outskirts of the city of Lichfield. In recent years new housing has been added to the established village, with a subsequent increase in numbers attending the school. There is a higher than average number of pupils who leave or join the school each year. Almost all pupils are of White British background and all speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with statements of educational needs is average. The school has received Healthy Schools status in recognition of its work.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Stephen's is a satisfactory school. It provides good pastoral care, guidance and support that promote good personal development. The school has been through a period of considerable change at leadership level that has temporarily slowed its progress. The current picture is far more positive. The relatively new headteacher and deputy headteacher are moving the school forward with determination. They complement each other's skills well and work effectively as a team. They are developing a good climate for learning and an increasingly cohesive approach amongst staff towards improvement. Parents hold the school, headteacher and staff in high regard. One parent typically commented, 'The teachers are a credit to their profession.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points and typically reach average standards by the end of Year 6. The rate of progress varies from class to class and is closely linked to the quality of teaching and the high mobility rate. The school is addressing persistent weaknesses, such as the performance of boys and progress in writing, as a matter of urgency. Although initiatives are beginning to be successful, there is still some way to go. The introduction of good quality tracking procedures and 'Red' assessment books for writing are proving effective because they show progress very accurately. Pupils enjoy having this record of their improvement. The use of assessment information to guide future learning is not yet fully embedded. Although inspection findings confirm encouraging signs of improvement, it is still too early to measure the full impact of recent initiatives on the standards pupils attain.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. All staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Teachers and support staff work together effectively to provide activities that the pupils enjoy. Teaching assistants make a strong, positive contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. The curriculum is in the process of change and strategies to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects are not yet fully developed. The high uptake of extra-curricular clubs adds much to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils have a good understanding of how to eat healthily and keep fit. Parents are justified in judging that their children are well cared for at St Stephen's. Focused support for potentially vulnerable or challenging pupils has resulted in, for example, the improved behaviour of some older boys. The school's good care, guidance and support enable most pupils to leave as confident, mature individuals.

The recently formed governing body is well-led and has set about its work with revitalised commitment. In a short space of time it has forged effective working links with senior staff and is far more involved than in the past. It recognises the need to gain greater insight into the school's overall performance. Currently, structures for monitoring

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and evaluation lack rigour and precision. Consequently, self-evaluation is sometimes over-generous in, for example, judging the quality of teaching. Senior leaders and subject co-ordinators do not always know the precise impact of initiatives on learning. However, the overall picture is one of improvement. The greater involvement of staff in moving the school forward and the purposeful working relationship between staff and governors give the school a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- During the current academic year, improve the performance of boys and more able pupils in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring pupils have more opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - developing the confidence and independence of learners in Key Stage 1
 - increasing the level of challenge provided in lessons so that all groups of pupils make the best possible progress.
- During the current academic year, develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching, so that good learning becomes the norm for all groups of pupils by;
 - sharing best practice in teaching
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information with accuracy to match work to the needs and abilities of pupils
 - ensuring activities capture the interest of all groups of pupils so that they are highly motivated to succeed.
- By the spring term of 2010, introduce a systematic and rigorous structure for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in order to ensure:
 - senior managers know the outcomes of initiatives on learning
 - middle managers have a clear overview of standards and progress
 - governors gain first-hand evidence in order to hold the school to account for its performance.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Indications from the school's 2009 test results for eleven-year-olds show that initiatives to raise standards in mathematics for these pupils were particularly successful. Progress elsewhere is variable. Inspection observations focused on the progress of different groups and found that, in lessons where topics capture boys' interest, boys and girls achieve equally well. In less successful lessons, more able pupils receive very little to challenge them and boys sometimes sit passively and are allowed not to get fully involved. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were found to make

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sound progress, through good quality support. Inspection of pupils' past and current work revealed a noticeable improvement in the quality of writing. It also confirmed that pupils in Key Stage 1, especially the more-able sometimes make slow progress when worksheet-based activities, particularly in mathematics, do little to challenge or develop independence. The overall picture is one of satisfactory progress, with signs that initiatives are starting to impact positively on standards.

Pupils enjoy their time in school and show good attitudes towards their work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school does much to celebrate other cultures and prepares pupils well for life in a multicultural society. Pupils are proud of their school and have a valued voice through their school council. As one pupil commented, 'I love my school.' Pupils know how to keep safe and have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They acquire satisfactory academic skills and good social skills in preparation for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Although teaching is satisfactory with some good features, its quality is not consistent

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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enough to promote good learning. Most classrooms are purposeful learning environments where relationships are strong. When teaching is at its best, pupils of all abilities rise to exciting challenges and are highly motivated to succeed. Topics capture the interest of boys particularly well in these lessons, guaranteeing good learning. In less successful lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not always give pupils enough time to practise skills. This teaching does not focus sufficiently on whether individual pupils make enough progress. Marking is improving but lacks consistency. In some classes pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work. In others, although assessment is satisfactory, its importance as a tool in raising standards is not fully recognised.

The curriculum is in the process of change. The school is embarking on developing greater creativity. Plans are also in hand to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills further through other subjects. The current range of activities clearly engages most pupils well. In their questionnaire responses pupils express a high level of enjoyment. Initiatives, such as a programme to beat dyslexia, promote good learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils value the enrichment opportunities on offer and visits to places such as Shugborough greatly enhance their learning. Extra-curricular sporting clubs promote healthy lifestyles well. However, the mixed Reception and Year 1 class organisation sometimes restricts the curriculum opportunities for both sets of pupils, and more able pupils miss out most when they receive too few opportunities to extend their learning.

Pastoral care is an important part of the school's work. High levels of commitment to pupils' welfare ensure that they feel safe and happy in school. Adults and pupils show respect for each other because they get along well. A wealth of support mechanisms enables pupils who are potentially vulnerable or who might otherwise find learning difficult to participate fully in school life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite three changes of leadership in five years, the school has managed to move forward to some degree. This is partly due to the stability provided by long-serving staff. There is now a new sense of determination to tackle underachievement. This is underpinned by the deputy headteacher's very strong lead in data analysis and a shared commitment towards raising overall school performance. However, the lack of rigour

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and precision in monitoring and evaluating leads to inconsistencies in, for example, the quality of teaching. The role of middle managers is in the process of development. They do not yet have a clear enough overview of achievement and standards. School improvement planning is well-structured and purposeful and provides small achievable targets for development. However, as with many other aspects of leadership, there is a lack of clarity in how the outcomes for pupils are measured.

Safeguarding procedures are secure but some policies are in need of updating. The promotion of community cohesion is developing satisfactorily. At a local level, pupils have purposeful links with other schools for their cultural development. Further afield, there are links with schools from different backgrounds. Opportunities are also given to pupils to visit mosques and temples and participate in activities such as 'spiritual dance'. However, the school recognises that it needs a more formal structure to help broaden pupils' horizons at a global level. The school promotes equality satisfactorily. However, although it values every pupil as an individual, it has only just started to track academic progress to show how particular groups of pupils perform. The school tackles discrimination effectively through, for example, providing

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the reception class with expected levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for their age and they make satisfactory progress. There is a strong, effective emphasis on children's personal and emotional development and children make good progress in this area of learning. Relationships are very strong, enabling children

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to settle quickly into routines. They very much enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The staff take every opportunity to develop children's confidence and self-esteem through a range of exciting and interesting activities. They promote language and early numeracy skills well and work effectively together as a team. Children gain a good early understanding of how to stay fit, healthy and safe. The new outdoor area is organised appropriately to provide children with a satisfactory range of activities. However, the covered area is small and occasionally restricts children's freedom of choice to work indoors or outside. Children in need of support gain much from good quality one-to-one attention. The current mixed-age class arrangements work well for most of the time. Occasionally, the groupings slow the progress of the more able children, particularly when activities do not provide enough challenge. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although staff have a strong commitment towards improvement, the impact that the mixed-age class arrangement has on children's development, for example, is not measured with sufficient rigour

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents were very supportive of the school. They particularly appreciated the leadership and management of the new headteacher, the approachability of teaching staff and that their children enjoy school and feel safe.

There were some concerns about how well parents were informed about their child's progress, the lack of support for some children's learning and the way in which the school deals with the poor behaviour of a few pupils. Inspectors looked at areas of concern. They agree that better communication with parents is a priority that the school has already recognised. They also found evidence that recent initiatives to improve the behaviour of a few pupils have resulted in more positive attitudes that have benefited the whole school community.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephen's Primary 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	72	23	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	52	37	45	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	41	41	49	7	8	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	41	39	47	7	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	47	40	48	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	37	43	52	7	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	52	39	47	1	1	0	0
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)	25	30	41	49	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	42	39	47	6	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	27	46	55	9	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	25	52	63	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	36	48	58	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	57	34	41	2	2	0	0

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.



19 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Primary School, Fradley, Lichfield WS13 8NL.

We enjoyed talking to you about your work, watching you work and play together and coming into your lessons. We particularly liked your 'Singing Assembly' because you enjoyed it so much.

You go to a satisfactory school where you feel safe and happy.

These are the things we liked most:

- most of you behave well
- you like your headteacher and the other adults that care for you very much
- you are very proud of your school and like the help and support you are given when you need it
- you know a lot about how to eat healthily and keep fit.

These are the things we have asked the headteacher and the other members of staff to do to make your school even better:

- help the boys and other children who are good at writing and numeracy to reach even higher standards
- make sure your teachers help all of you to make good progress
- make better checks on how well the school is doing.

You can help by behaving well and always trying to do your best.

Best wishes to you all

Yours sincerely

Kath Campbell

Lead inspector

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