

St Stephen's RC Primary School

Chappell Road, Droylsden, Manchester, M43 7NA

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress across Years 3 to 6 is not always good, especially in mathematics and for the more-able pupils.
- The quality of teaching is not always good in all classes and year groups. Teachers do not always use information about how well pupils have already learned to help set work which meets the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils do not always understand what they are learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders have been too generous in their evaluation of how well the school is doing. Their monitoring of the work of the school is not thorough enough. They are yet to make sure that the quality of teaching is good.
- Although leaders collect a lot of data about pupils' achievement, they do not use it well enough to hold teachers fully accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes.
- Although governors are very supportive of the school, they do not know enough about its strengths and areas for development to provide a good level of challenge to the leadership.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They take great pride in their school and trust their teachers. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their improved attendance.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. They are unfailingly polite to each other, to their teachers and to visitors to the school. They have a very good understanding of how to support each other and how to keep themselves safe.
- The school provides a good range of enriching activities outside lessons such as, in music and art. As a result pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. As a result children make good progress when they first start school.
- Leaders have successfully addressed some of the issues from the previous inspection, such as improving pupils' attainment in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 teachers and 21 lessons or parts of lessons. They also observed teaching assistants working with pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and analysed the quality of their work and marking in their books.
- Opportunities were taken to talk to pupils about school in lessons, during playtime and lunchtime, and there was also a formal discussion with a group for pupils from Years 3 to 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation. These included minutes of meetings, school policies, improvement plans, school data tracking pupils' progress, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Christine Birchall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Allyson Ingall	Additional Inspector
Prydwen Elfed-Owens	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a much larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has on-site before- and after-school care, which is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at always good or better, especially in mathematics, in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that information about how well pupils have learned is used well to provide activities which meet the needs of all pupils and to challenge the more-able pupils
 - ensuring that verbal and written feedback gives clear guidance to help pupils to improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to develop a good understanding of basic calculation skills
 - setting teachers clear targets which will help them to improve their teaching skills, and providing them with the right training and support
 - using examples of good teaching practice to coach others and improve the quality of teaching overall.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders' monitoring of the school's work is thorough and accurate, so that improvement plans are focused on the most important priorities
 - using data showing pupils' progress to ensure that individuals and groups of pupils always make good progress between Years 3 and 6 and that teachers are held accountable for the achievement of pupils in their classes
 - ensuring that governors know the school well enough to be able to challenge leaders and hold them to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly in line with expectations for their age, except in reading and writing where the majority are below average. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- As a result of good teaching and interesting activities, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Good progress is not sustained between Years 3 and 6. Pupils do not make good progress in all classes or year groups, especially in mathematics. In 2012, for example, not enough pupils reached the highest levels at the end of Year 6.
- Leaders have invested in highly skilled and well trained teaching assistants. As a result disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive the support they need to achieve as well as their classmates. Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are doing as well as similar pupils across the country.
- Pupils enjoy reading. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn good ways to develop their reading and pupils in most other year groups do so too. The teaching of reading is well organised and managed, and pupils have access to good quality and age-appropriate books.
- Pupils' progress in writing has improved since the last inspection. Most are able to write in a range of different styles and for different purposes. They can apply their writing skills across a number of different subjects, for example, writing Second World War diaries in history.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics requires improvement. Teachers give pupils too many worksheets to complete which do not always help pupils to develop a clear understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils do not have a good enough grasp of basic calculation skills and rely too heavily on the use of calculators. As a result, in mathematics, some pupils are working below the levels expected for their age.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although inspectors saw examples of good and outstanding teaching, the quality of teaching overall is not always good across the school.
- In the best lessons, teachers use what they know about the pupils to make sure that the activities they provide help pupils to build on what they already know and can do, and so make good progress. These lessons are exciting and challenging, and pupils, including the more able, are fascinated.
- In a Year 2 science lesson, for example, pupils were helping 'Professor Sparks' to find out how a light bulb lit up. They were working from very little knowledge, but good questioning, resources and feedback promoted lots of excited discussion between pupils, and the teacher recorded their progress on film.
- In another Year 2 lesson, a teaching assistant encouraged pupils to take it in turns to pretend to be Red Riding Hood while other pupils asked questions. They asked her questions about how she felt at different points in her story. Again, skilful teaching allowed pupils to make progress from initially asking questions hesitantly, to asking increasingly sophisticated and searching questions.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage classroom is bright and stimulating. It is organised well so that it provides plenty of opportunities for children to use their imaginations as they play and learn. There is a good balance between activities that children can choose for themselves and those directed by adults.

- Some teachers' marking gives feedback to pupils which is accurate and detailed and explains to them very clearly what they need to do to improve. Pupils were expected to respond and act on what they read. This good practice however is not always seen. Some marking, although encouraging, does not help pupils to move forward.
- There is some very good use of technology as a stimulus to improve pupils' writing skills and to record pupils' work. In some lessons though, technology was a distraction and was not used in a way which provided pupils with enough challenge.
- Some teachers do not always plan activities which meet the needs of all pupils. As a result work is sometimes too easy for some and too hard for others.
- Too many lessons, particularly in mathematics, rely heavily on worksheets. This does not give pupils enough chance to develop and use their skills. For some pupils, this means that they are not sure about some mathematical concepts.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very happy in school and say they feel very safe. Feedback from parents confirms this. Attendance has improved and is now slightly above average. Pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are confident, warm and friendly. Inspectors were approached by pupils as young as Year 1 welcoming them to the school and wishing them an enjoyable visit. Pupils have excellent manners and treat everyone with courtesy and respect. They genuinely care about each other and have a good understanding of right and wrong.
- Teachers have provided pupils with a good range of strategies to look after themselves and each other. Pupils know about different forms of bullying, but say that there is very little of it, and that teachers are very quick to sort it out when there is. Prefects and peace mediators are on hand to help if there are any problems. These pupils show real maturity not only in trying to help their school mates, but also knowing when a problem is too much for them to help with and referring it to a teacher.
- Pupils' moral, social, spiritual, and cultural development is good. They work extremely well together. They are thoughtful and reflective and listen to each other's points of view. They are quick to notice when their classmates are struggling with their work and to offer to help.
- Pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes is as good as it is in lessons. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they respond well.
- Occasionally, when teaching is not exciting or challenging enough, pupils become passive in lessons and do not get as fully involved in their learning as they could.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The actions of leaders and managers have successfully improved some aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection, for example, raising attainment in reading and writing.
- Senior leaders undertake a variety of monitoring activities to check how well the school is doing and are encouraging other members of staff to get involved in the process. However, their views of the school's performance are too generous. Leaders regularly observe teaching. They give supportive feedback to teachers but do not always explain clearly enough to them how they could improve their teaching in order to increase the rate of progress of pupils in their classes. Teachers are given targets through performance management, but they are not always given the training they need to help them develop. There are examples of some good and outstanding practice in the school which are not yet being fully shared.
- Although leaders are developing a better system for tracking pupils' progress, they are not yet using this information so that they are clear about any differences in the progress of various groups of pupils, classes, subjects or year groups. As a result pupils who are not making enough

progress are not always identified quickly enough.

- The 'innovation teams' are encouraging staff at all levels to get involved in elements of leadership within the school and ensuring that there is a shared vision and belief. However, their plans are not always focused on the most appropriate priorities.
- The curriculum has many strengths. It is highly effective in promoting the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given good opportunities to improve their reading, writing skills and information and communication technology skills by practising them in different subjects. There is a good range of enriching activities beyond lessons, such as, visits to museums and places of educational interest, and plenty of clubs and activities including music and art. Pupils enjoy these and are actively involved.
- There are good partnerships, particularly with parents to support pupils' development. The pupil-premium funding has been used wisely, for example, to provide one-to-one tuition, the appointment of a learning mentor, to provide training for the 'Better Reading' programme as well as widening opportunities for music and art. This demonstrates the school's commitment to making sure all pupils achieve equally well. There remains work to do however to ensure that all pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics and the more-able pupils.
- The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe meet current requirements. The site is secure and procedures for recruitment and for checking visitors to the school are thorough.
- The local authority has identified the school as needing only 'light touch' support. The school makes its own arrangements for professional advice and guidance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive of the school and rightly judge that pupils' behaviour and well-being are real strengths of the school. They ensure that all appropriate policies are in place and that safeguarding procedures are effective. However, their knowledge of the school's other strengths and areas for development are not as good as it needs to be. For example, they were unclear about what the pupil premium funding is and how it is spent, and unsure of whether performance management is used effectively to move teaching forward. As a result they are not in a strong enough position to challenge school leaders and hold them fully to account for its improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106253
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	400835

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr William Fallon
Headteacher	Mr Brendan Marley
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2009
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