

St Stephen's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106253
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309071
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Jones

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 on roll	
School	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Fallon
Headteacher	Mr R Morris
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Chappell Road Droylsden Manchester Lancashire M43 7NA
Telephone number	0161 3702071
Fax number	0161 3014259

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2008
Inspection number	309071

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large Catholic primary school serving a residential community of varied social and economic backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British origin, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages, some with English as an additional language, has grown since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has Healthy School and Extended School status. It also holds the Activemark and Eco School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in the circumstances it could be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the achievement and standards of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning, and the academic guidance provided for pupils.

Across Years 1 to 6, pupils' standards are not high enough and they make inadequate progress. Whilst the school's overall self-evaluation of its work is satisfactory, it overestimates the impact of its improvement strategies. Newly introduced monitoring systems are generating data about pupil performance. However, these are not yet sufficiently developed to ensure pupils' targets are as challenging as they should be or show clearly how pupils progress as they move through Years 1 to 6. This means that underachievement is not always identified, and individual pupils do not always receive teaching appropriate to their needs. The systematic checking of the school's work is improving, but it does not yet rigorously cover enough aspects of pupil performance.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and this results in children making satisfactory progress. Elsewhere in the school, teaching is not sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. Although the curriculum is satisfactory, teaching is not strong enough. It is not making sufficient impact on raising pupils' achievement. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not provide pupils with enough advice about how well they are doing or how to improve.

Too many staff lack the knowledge and experience to accurately assess their pupils' progress and to set appropriate targets. This is reflected in the pupils' inadequate achievement in reading and writing in Key Stage 1, and in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. Consequently, teaching and learning are inadequate overall.

School leaders recognise that they did not respond sufficiently rapidly or effectively to the significant decline in its performance that began soon after the last inspection. This resulted in significant underachievement amongst pupils of all abilities. Following the recent reorganisation of the school's senior leadership team, a programme of school improvement has been implemented with vigour and determination. The school's governors have improved their involvement in the school's strategic planning and the monitoring of its work. The impact of the reorganised leadership team is now starting to be felt and leadership and management are now satisfactory. Whilst the school has not moved on sufficiently since the last inspection and does not yet provide adequate value for money, it does have a satisfactory capacity to move forward in the future. This is clearly demonstrated by the recently implemented improvement strategies which have resulted in standards that are beginning to rise throughout the school.

The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils and this makes a significant contribution to their good personal development and well-being. Pupils are very welcoming, polite and keen to talk about their lessons and interests. They enjoy school and this is reflected in their consistently high attendance and their enthusiasm to participate in the many activities organised by the school. Behaviour is good in class and in the well equipped playgrounds. Pupils care for each other; the work of older pupils as play leaders and peace mediators helps keep all pupils happily occupied and friendly at break and lunchtimes. Pupils have a very good awareness of

the need to follow a healthy lifestyle, and the school holds awards that recognise the effectiveness of its work in this area. Pupils are encouraged to contribute well to the school and wider community. The broadly average standards that pupils reach by the end of Year 6, whilst not high enough, satisfactorily prepare them for moving on to secondary school and their later life.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected for their age in most areas. They move on with their learning at a satisfactory pace so that by the start of Year 1 most children are working at the expected levels. Valuable links are forged with parents, many of whom act as helpers. This helps children to settle quickly into school. As a result, they make friends quickly, treat each other and adults with respect and become confident learners. Staff work well as a team and provide all children with the opportunities needed to meet their high expectations. The good procedures in place ensure that children's care, guidance and support are given a high priority. Teachers' planning and assessment take account of children's individual needs and their next steps in learning. The Foundation Stage is led and managed satisfactorily. The indoor areas of the Foundation Stage are interesting and well resourced and provide pupils with a relevant focus on their areas of learning. However, this quality is not matched in the outdoor areas, which do not provide the same levels of challenge and stimulation. Consequently, opportunities to further improve the progress and development of children are restricted. The Foundation Stage team have made a start on addressing this situation, but more remains to be done.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning to raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in reading and writing in Key Stage 1, and in science and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that all pupils have challenging targets and that their progress towards them is more closely tracked to identify underachievement and result in more appropriate teaching.
- Ensure that all pupils are fully aware of how they are performing and what they can do to improve their work.
- Improve the rigour of leadership and management in checking the performance of the school to swiftly bring about the necessary improvements in achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The satisfactory start pupils make in the Foundation Stage is not maintained in the rest of the school. Their progress declines and by the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading and writing, although standards in mathematics have recovered this year to average levels. The standards reached by pupils in Year 6 currently have improved with pupils doing best in English. This is an improvement on the below average levels attained the previous year, although the school has not met its targets in science and mathematics. The achievement of all groups of pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number with English as an additional language is inadequate. This is because pupils do not make good enough progress over time; work in lessons is not matched well enough to their needs and teachers' expectations are frequently too low.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They show a good understanding of different religions, and have the opportunity in class and assemblies to reflect upon their experiences. They have a strong awareness of the right and wrong ways to behave. They say that bullying is rare, but if it happens is quickly dealt with. Pupils say 'We are like one big family', and this is borne out by the way all pupils show respect and tolerance towards each other and the excellent racial harmony that exists. However, pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society is not as developed as it could be. Pupils gain very good social skills as they contribute well to community events and charity appeals. Safe practices are encouraged well through lessons and projects such as those on road safety and drug and alcohol abuse. Pupils are given good opportunities to have a real influence on school life. The energetic school council has made a significant contribution to improving the school grounds, and are justifiably proud of the fine adventure playground enjoyed by all pupils. The attractive peace and memorial gardens have also been designed by pupils. This good, strong sense of community is also seen in the school's very good emphasis on ecological awareness. It generates some of its electricity through solar panels, and has well established areas for wildlife and plants on the school site.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate because pupils do not make sufficient progress in lessons in order to achieve as well as they should over time. In too many lessons teachers do not take account of the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils and the least able often find their work too difficult, even with the support of the school's dedicated teaching assistants. This is because there is too much whole-class teaching directed at the middle ability pupils. Whilst pupils work hard and have good relationships with adults, the expectations of teachers as to what the pupils are capable of doing are too low and this curbs their achievement. Also, some staff are not yet able to effectively implement the school's new assessment system. As a result, the standards of pupil's work and their rates of progress are not always accurately measured. This leads to the teachers having a false picture of pupils' individual achievement with the result that pupils are given targets which lack challenge and work set is inappropriate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. It is developing a skills based approach that enriches the experiences of all pupils. This thematic approach in a range of subjects has made learning more interesting and pupils are more motivated as a result. The school is extending this approach to enhance its teaching of English and mathematics. It is aware that its current wholly thematic approach to the science curriculum has not been successful in raising achievement to the required level. As a result, the science curriculum is undergoing an urgent review. The use of information and communication technology as a learning resource is particularly effective, as is the emphasis on involving visitors in lessons and ensuring pupils gain first-hand learning experiences through educational visits

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school cares for its pupils well. Pupils benefit from a secure, well maintained environment. They are well supervised, and say there are many adults that they can turn to if they are upset or troubled. There are good links with external agencies that enable the school to provide the most appropriate support for those pupils requiring additional help. Current requirements for safeguarding the pupils are met and good relationships help to promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Parents are supportive of the school and greatly appreciate the before and after-school clubs the school provides. Academic guidance is less strong. Although a new assessment system has been developed, pupils' targets are not always challenging enough or appropriate to meet individual needs. The tracking of pupils' progress is not sufficiently rigorous to identify underachievement. Marking of pupils' work varies in quality and does not always give pupils enough guidance on how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Their achievement suffers as a result.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Actions by the school's leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on the school's performance. Key areas for improvement have been identified and detailed, practical action plans have been implemented. The school is committed to increasing the skills and expertise of its staff through high quality training. The introduction of the phonics programme and the new mathematics framework has made a significant contribution to improving standards in English and mathematics. The school is also addressing the leadership and management of science to improve achievement in this subject. However, arrangements for checking how well the school is improving are not yet carried out with sufficient rigour. The school has recently started to involve more leaders in this area to help raise standards and achievement. Managers are beginning to use the information about pupil achievement to drive up standards but have not yet ensured that all staff have the expertise needed to make the best use of it. The school's governors are committed to improving the school and work tirelessly in its support. They, too, are holding the school more to account for its performance.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	2
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?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Stephen's RC Primary School, Manchester, M43 7NA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and really appreciated your help. We would especially like to thank the school councillors, play leaders and peace mediators who took the time to talk to us. Well done for your good behaviour and good attendance!

When we spoke, you told us that you enjoy school, especially taking part in the many sporting and dramatic activities in and out of school. You also told us that you feel safe in school and enjoy the chance to eat healthily and take exercise. We were impressed with your fund-raising activities to help your school and charity, and the way many of you are keen to take responsibility to help others.

We found that children in the Nursery and Reception classes are making satisfactory progress with their work. However, in the rest of the school many of you are still not achieving as well as you should be and do not know how well you are doing or how to improve your work. We would like your school to improve the teaching you receive so you can make better progress, especially in reading and writing in Key Stage 1, and in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. We have also asked the school to improve the ways in which it sets your targets and checks on how well you are progressing.

We think that your school should be better and so have decided that it needs a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that your school will be working to make things better and an inspector will visit soon to check that things are improving fast enough.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by asking your teachers how you can improve your work. We have asked the leaders of the school to improve the way they check how the school is doing so as to help bring about the improvements needed.