

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121640
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380291
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2012
Lead inspector	Katharine Halifax

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Gregory
Headteacher	Peter Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Katharine Halifax
Sheila Kaye

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 11 teachers and some advanced teaching assistants teaching 15 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and school staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of the governing body meetings. They heard pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read. The inspectors analysed the responses to 64 parental questionnaires, and also those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves the parishes of St. Stephen, St. Margaret Clitherow, and Sacred Heart, Broughton. The number of pupils has increased considerably since the last inspection, as has the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Although three-quarters of the population is of White British heritage, the school now caters for pupils from thirteen different countries from Eastern Europe, South East Asia, the Philippines and the Caribbean. An increasing number are new to the country and join the school speaking little or no English. The proportion of pupils in care, or who are Travellers is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs varies considerably from year to year, but is below average overall. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Amongst other awards, the school has achieved Healthy School status, the Activemark (bronze) and the North Yorkshire Inclusion Quality Mark. A breakfast club and an after-school club are available to families.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. It successfully embraces all learners and celebrates the rich diversity of its community. Excellent links have been established with parents, carers, health and other professionals.
- Achievement is outstanding. Pupils in all age groups make remarkable progress. By Year 6 attainment is well above average. Boys in Key Stage 2 make equally good progress to girls in all subjects, but they do not always apply their literacy targets to their writing in topic work or science. Moreover, the handwriting of some boys is not easy to read. In addition to making excellent academic progress, pupils acquire skills such as communication, and gathering and using information, which stand them in good stead for life-long learning. Pupils experience considerable success in sport.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding and they have an excellent understanding of keeping safe. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching is outstanding. Adults are skilled at promoting pupils' speaking and listening. Numerous opportunities to discuss ideas with a partner lead to healthy debate and problem solving. Although teachers plan for pupils to further their literacy in all subjects, in some classes at Key Stage 2, literacy targets are not sufficiently focussed, nor reviewed frequently enough.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. It is visionary, passionate leadership that is at the heart of this thriving school. Leaders have high aspirations for pupils, their families and for staff. The monitoring of teachers' performance, including classroom practice and the ensuing professional training has raised attainment in all subjects. Likewise, training for teaching and supporting the learning of pupils with dyslexia has had a significant impact on the progress of these pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure boys at Key Stage 2 write to the best of their ability in all subjects and at all times by:
 - ensuring literacy targets are specific and reviewed when met
 - ensuring boys use and apply their literacy targets to all written pieces of work
 - ensuring boys' writing is legible and well-organised at all times.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Inspection findings endorse the views of parents and carers that pupils make excellent progress and relish all the school has to offer. From the moment children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter their classroom each morning, they are full of confidence, eager to learn, and bursting with excitement for what the day may offer. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' enthusiasm is infectious. Attainment on entry to the Nursery class is below that typical of children of this age. It is well below for children's social and language development. As the result of outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make remarkable progress with most attaining levels expected by the end of the Reception Year. The excellent progress continues in Key Stage 1. Attainment by Year 2 has risen considerably since the last inspection. From being almost a year behind the levels expected in reading, writing and mathematics, it is now on a par in reading, and ahead of national standards in writing and mathematics. Progress throughout Key Stage 2 is equally strong. Attainment has been consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics and is now well above overall. In both English and mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is almost double the national figure. Pupils' attainment in science shows a similar pattern.

The introduction of daily phonics sessions (the connection between letters and the sounds they make), coupled with individual daily reading lessons has raised attainment in reading, as well as engendering a love of books. By Year 2, pupils have acquired a range of strategies to help them make sense of new words. They read simple texts with increasing fluency. Pupils' skills are furthered at Key Stage 2; they read with deeper understanding using their knowledge well to research topics such as the Olympics. Pupils are responding particularly well to the initiatives to raise attainment in writing. They write at length and for different purposes in religious education, science and topic work. However, in their eagerness to get their ideas on paper, the handwriting and presentation of some boys' work is not as good as it could be.

The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is comparable to that of their peers. Pupils with dyslexia thrive because staff are knowledgeable about the condition and use appropriate methods and resources to aid learning. Pupils who are new to speaking English blossom through the help they and their families receive.

Quality of teaching

Pupils make remarkable progress because teaching is first rate and adults are knowledgeable about how pupils learn. Teachers are skilled at including effective opportunities for all capabilities in all parts of lessons. Planning is meticulous with activities carefully matched to pupils' abilities, interests, and style of learning. Precisely targeted questions enable teachers to ascertain that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as those who have a gift or talent, have a good grasp of what is being taught. Lessons are lively, often of a practical nature and appeal especially well to boys. Very effective support assistants and nursery nurses play a sizeable part in children's and pupils' learning. Adults have high expectations and are expert in presenting information that makes pupils think and reason. Teachers plan for pupils to be enthralled by their learning. This was evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children arrive each morning desperate to check if the 'dinosaur egg' had hatched. Equally, older pupils experience awe and wonder, for example, when making working models of 'volcanoes'.

Assessment is rigorous and accurate. Regular marking enables pupils to identify the next steps in their learning. Pupils say they are gaining a lot from being allowed to edit and mark their own work. They say this helps them realise where they have made omissions and how they could improve. Pupils now have targets to accelerate their learning. However, some literacy targets are not sufficiently focussed. For example, boys did not find the target 'to use higher level punctuation' as helpful as 'to use semi-colons and brackets'. In some classes, the targets are reviewed only half-termly rather than as soon as they are achieved. Colourful displays around the school celebrate achievement, and support learning particularly in literacy and numeracy. Homework contributes considerably to pupils' learning. Pupils appreciate having a choice of activities and this has resulted in some excellent multi-media presentations, and models of, for example, the Acropolis.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspection findings endorse the views of parents, carers and pupils that behaviour is exceptionally good. Parents and carers made comments about how well the school enables pupils with the most complex needs to manage their behaviour so that it does not interrupt the learning of others. They say instances of bullying such as name-calling are very rare and are nipped in the bud. Pupils found it difficult to recall any such instances. Pupils rise to the school's aims, showing respect, love, and compassion. They enjoy a challenge, quoting the target of the week to 'aim high', and are proud of their achievements. A highlight for most is being 'pupil of the day'. Pupils positively grow in stature and confidence as their classmates list their attributes. Pupils are keen to show visitors all the school has to offer, and to share memorable moments such as their recent visit to Wimbledon.

Pupils take safety very seriously and are keen to share their knowledge. They explain in detail what to do if any concern arises using the internet or mobile telephones. Through an intense cycling course and personal survival swimming awards they acquire skills to keep them safe on the roads and near water. While pupils grumble good-naturedly about 'teachers lecturing us on keeping safe at the end of every half

term', they are acutely aware of the dangers presented by the nearby river, canal and railway.

Leadership and management

Leaders are clear and determined in their pursuit of excellence. Through innovative ideas, they have enhanced what is taught and how it is taught. Leaders know what the school does well and where the slightest improvement can be made. They have excellent capacity, to continue to do so. New initiatives are carefully considered to ensure they are of benefit to pupils. High quality professional training alongside the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning enables teachers to perform at the highest level. Robust systems are used effectively to track pupils' progress and address any gaps in learning, particularly of pupils who arrive at the school other than the usual starting time. Equally, when the progress of some younger pupils in mathematics appeared to be slowing, an additional programme was introduced which boosted their achievement and got them back on track. With the changing school population, attendance has been a concern, but the initiatives introduced have resulted in an upward turn in attendance.

Governance is outstanding. Members of the governing body are knowledgeable, skilled and fulfil their role in holding the school to account exceptionally well. They have ensured the policies and procedures to safeguard and protect pupils meet requirements, and are mindful of pupils who have the potential to be vulnerable. Members of the governing body are equally vigilant in ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils to be successful and in tackling discrimination. Leaders deploy staff well, building on their strengths and ensuring every member of staff develops the skills to become a manager. Exceptionally close links with parents and carers, and workshops in, for example, reading, have resulted in families being more involved in their child's education. Parents and carers appreciate the very well-run breakfast and after-school clubs.

The curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now outstanding. The development of a topic-based approach, with imaginative themes has inspired and engaged pupils. Furthermore, pupils' evaluations of the headway that has been made as each topic develops enable them to follow their interests and take responsibility for their learning. The curriculum makes outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils reverently explain the meaning of their 'Mission Tree', and are positively animated when describing 'international Mass' celebrations. On such occasions, they explain, pupils from each country and culture in the school wear their national dress, carry their national flag and sing songs in their own language. Though a Catholic school, pupils have numerous opportunities to learn about other faiths through visits to different places of worship. In addition, pupils speak with excitement about the planned visit to the Paralympics when they will be hosted by their link school in inner-city London.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



12 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton, BD23 1PJ

First may I say what a delightful time my colleague and I had when we visited your school? Thank you for talking to us and making us feel so welcome. Thank you too for showing us around the school. It was clear from our chats and the questionnaire replies we received from you, and your parents and carers, that you enjoy school, and think that you are safe and very well cared for.

Your school provides you with an outstanding education. As well as working hard, you have huge fun in lessons, in sport, in clubs, and on your many visits out of school. We were particularly impressed by everything you told us about your visit to Wimbledon, and your proposed visit to the Paralympics. You work very hard, and are very well behaved - even though we had torrential rain during the inspection! This means all of you make excellent progress, including those who learn more slowly and those of you who grasp new ideas quickly. All this happens because the school has excellent leadership; you have first rate teaching and classroom support, and the curriculum is exciting.

Here is one area we have asked your leaders to consider to make your school better.

- You achieve exceptionally well in all subjects including writing, but some boys do not always write as neatly as they could, nor do they always remember their literacy targets when writing in other subjects. We would like to see this improved.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and we wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Katharine Halifax
Lead Inspector

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