

# Steam Mills Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	115522
<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379091
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	John Eadie

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	113
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stuart Jeffery
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marcella Scoles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Steam Mills Cinderford GL14 3JD
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<b>Fax number</b>	01594 822567
<b>Email address</b>	head@steammills.gloucs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

Inspection team

John Eadie

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 14 lessons and observed 6 teachers. He spent nearly two thirds of the available time observing teaching and learning. He met informally with parents at the start of the inspection and had meetings with pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, looked at the school's self-evaluation, the report of a review carried out by the local authority in October 2011, policies, particularly those relevant to keeping pupils safe, and data giving evidence of the progress that pupils are making. Questionnaires returned by 53 parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by 111 pupils and 10 staff.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and almost all pupils are White British. None speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly average and most of these have moderate learning difficulties. There are no pupils with disabilities. The school meets the current floor standards. The school has recently started a breakfast club. There have been a number of staff changes recently. The headteacher took up her post in September 2011 and two of the four classes are currently being covered by temporary teachers as the full-time teachers are on maternity leave.

The village playgroup occupies a building on the school site but it is managed privately and will be inspected separately.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school.
- It was judged to be satisfactory at its previous inspection and has made particularly rapid progress over the last year.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils continue to make good progress through the rest of the school. Their attainment in English and mathematics is significantly above average by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- Although pupils' progress in mathematics is good, it is not as strong as that in English, mainly because teachers do not always use the sections of lessons when they are speaking to the whole class as effectively as they could.
- Pupils' progress has improved as a result of rapid developments in the quality of teaching. While teaching overall is good, there were examples of outstanding teaching observed during the inspection.
- Recently introduced systems of assessment and target setting are beginning to be used well by staff. However, targets set for pupils' next steps in learning are not always sufficiently precisely matched to their needs and abilities and teachers' marking does not often refer to these targets in order to accelerate progress further.
- Pupils are thoughtful, considerate and welcoming to visitors and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The school has thorough procedures for keeping pupils safe and pupils say they are very safe in school and that they are comfortable approaching an adult if they have a problem.
- The headteacher has instituted procedures, such as the revised system for tracking pupils' progress, which have accelerated the rate of progress that the school is making.
- Staff and the governing body are fully involved in the process of school improvement and there is a shared sense of determination to take the school forward.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the systems of setting targets for pupils' next steps in learning by ensuring that teachers:

- set very precise targets for each pupil, closely matched to their abilities and needs
- refer to these targets and give pupils time to respond to their marking when they feed back to pupils on the success of their learning.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by ensuring that the whole-class sections of lessons are used creatively so that pupils of all ability levels are fully engaged throughout.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire rightly regard their children as making good progress in all year groups. By the time pupils leave, their attainment is above average in English and mathematics. Generally, children join the school with levels of skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 broadly average. Effective attention is given in this class to the development of basic skills, particularly reading and number. A good start is made at developing phonics skills, but progress sometimes slows when the whole age group does this together and the work does not always match the needs of all children. Children also develop their social skills well, as was seen when one child said to their partner, 'Go for it, you can do it!' when they were using the phonics software together.

Learning in lessons is typified by application and enjoyment. This was observed in a lesson in the class for pupils in Years 1 and 2, where concentration levels were high as pupils were carrying out their task of retelling an Aboriginal creation myth. Pupils of all ages said that they enjoy their lessons and that there is an interesting range of things planned for them to do. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were also observed thoroughly enjoying a computer program and the use of the interactive whiteboard in their phonics sessions. The school has rightly placed a considerable emphasis on improving reading and this has been successful as, by the end of Year 2, attainment in reading is above average. Attainment is high in reading by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6.

Pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in English. In one English lesson observed in Years 3 and 4, the pupils were enthralled as the teacher read a short section from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. After sorting a variety of words relating to the main character's feelings, they gave extremely mature reasons why they had made their choices. Similarly, in a lesson in Years 5 and 6, pupils performed remarkably whilst practising a presentation they had created. Even more impressive was the exceptionally sophisticated suggestions they provided for improving their performance still further. These included a longer pause at one point for more dramatic effect and the suggestion to convey more emotions than just humour in one section. While still good, pupils' progress in mathematics is not quite as rapid as that in English. Pupils enjoy the challenging work that they are set and a good proportion are working at levels well above those expected for their age. There are no significant differences in the rates of progress of boys and girls or of any other groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs.

## Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is consistently good through the school, with examples of outstanding practice. Almost all parents agree that their children are being taught well. Lessons observed were planned well and teachers were enthusiastic, which ensured that pupils were attentive and engaged. Yet, there are times in mathematics lessons when the teacher is talking to the whole class, when pupils' attention is not so focused because some have already understood and others are struggling with the concept. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils, particularly the more able, relish these challenges and respond well to them. Independence is promoted well, with pupils being encouraged to have a go themselves and not be afraid of getting things wrong.

A particular strength of teaching is the way that teachers use questions to extend pupils' learning and to get them to put into words their thinking, which is increasing their understanding. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those with special educational needs. These pupils make good, and sometimes better, progress as careful plans are made to meet their needs and their progress is carefully monitored. Teachers assess pupils' gains in knowledge and understanding well, and often adapt their plans for a lesson to take account of the success or otherwise of individuals' learning in the previous lesson. Nevertheless, they are not yet consistently using this assessment information to set short-term targets that are precise enough to help pupils' next steps in learning. Teachers generally mark pupils' work well, giving them clear pointers to help them to improve their work. However, these pointers are not often related specifically to pupils' targets and teachers do not give pupils sufficient time to respond to suggestions they make in their marking.

Curriculum planning is thorough and an interesting and engaging curriculum has been created. This planning makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed exploring rhythms when they were playing drums with a visiting music teacher.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour observed during the inspection was good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils said that this was typical, although they said that there are infrequent occasions when the behaviour of one or two does not reach these standards. However, this rarely disrupts learning. This view was confirmed by parents and carers. All of those who responded to the questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good, although a very few said that lessons are occasionally disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. A few also commented that their children had had an issue with bullying. One pupil said, 'There is not much bullying and when it happens it is sorted very quickly.' Others spoken to confirmed that this is the case and said that all types of bullying are dealt with much better than in the past. A parent confirmed this saying, 'Bullying is not tolerated and is always dealt with well.'

Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning and their school and they are considerate and sensitive to the needs of others. They are sensible and well aware of

potential risks and the steps they need to take to avoid them and this includes awareness of safety when using the internet. All pupils, on their questionnaires, said they feel safe in school and the overwhelming majority of parents agreed.

## **Leadership and management**

The arrival of the new headteacher has added impetus to the improvements that were already happening. She has quickly analysed the key areas for improvement and, fully supported by the staff team and the governing body, has put in place initiatives to address them. For instance, although there was a system of tracking pupils' progress, the headteacher has introduced an updated one which has enabled teachers to plan more effectively for pupils' next steps in learning. Easier to follow, it has enabled members of the governing body to monitor pupils' progress for themselves. The governing body has restructured its committees and regards its 'outcomes' committee as a valuable new initiative. This demonstrates their commitment to raising standards still further. This responsibility is shared by all staff and governors and, with their track record of improvement over time, indicates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Teachers say that levels of support for them in improving their teaching are very good and extremely well matched to their needs. They say that this has been a major contributory factor in improving the quality of teaching. Teachers deliver a broad, balanced curriculum, which has been designed well to meet the needs of their particular pupils. For instance, a good range of intervention strategies is used well to help those identified as being in danger of falling behind to catch up quickly. The moral and social aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are particularly strong and a good range of opportunities is created for pupils to appreciate their own cultural heritage and those of peoples from around the world.

Equality of opportunity is high on the school's agenda, as demonstrated by the minimal differences in performance between groups. Some time ago the school identified that boys were not doing as well as girls, but this has been addressed well and all are now making similar progress. Safeguarding procedures are thorough, with a substantial number of staff having the enhanced training. Regular training is also provided for governors, who take their responsibilities very seriously and check on safeguarding policies and procedures regularly. Communication between the school and themselves was raised as a concern by a very small minority of parents and carers when answering the questionnaire. The school is already aware of this and is developing new ways of communicating, for example text messaging.

## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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](http://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.
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.**



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Steam Mills Primary School, Cinderford GL14 3JD**

Thank you so much for welcoming me so warmly when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed talking with many of you, seeing you hard at work in class and having fun on the playground.

#### **These are the best things I found about your school.**

- Steam Mills is a good school.
- When you leave from Year 6, you are reaching above average standards in English and mathematics.
- You are making good progress and this has improved over the last year or so. This is because you are being taught well. Teaching is sometimes outstanding. I particularly enjoyed the super literacy lessons in Classes 3 and 4.
- The youngest children have a good start at school, particularly in reading. This continues through the school as all of you are being taught to read very well.
- You behave well in lessons and around the school and are considerate of others.
- Your headteacher and all staff and governors have really good plans to continue to improve your school and to help you to do your very best.

#### **There are two things I have suggested that could be improved.**

- The targets set for you so that you know how to improve your work are sometimes not carefully matched to your particular needs. Also, teachers do not often refer to these targets when they mark your work or give you time to respond to their marking.
- Although your progress in mathematics is good, it is not quite as good as in English. This is partly because there are times in lessons when you need a wider variety of activities to ensure that all of you are fully engaged.

Thank you so much once again. I know that you will do your best to help by continuing to work hard. You could help by asking your teachers exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

John Eadie  
Lead inspector

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