

Stoke Minster CofE Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132200
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	381454
Inspection dates	31 January 2012–1 February 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Drake

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	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Morgan
Headteacher	Lynne Willis
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2009
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	31 January 2012–01 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Drake
Kevin Johnson
David Halford

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 11 different teachers, including a series of sessions promoting pupils' understanding of the links between letters and sounds. They also heard nine pupils read individually. The inspectors held meetings with three groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff. When preparing for the inspection, the lead inspector looked at the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but no responses were recorded to aid inspection planning. The inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised examples of pupils' work as well as documentation relating to pupils' achievement and school management. They also took into account questionnaires completed by 97 pupils, 20 members of staff and 88 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Stoke Minster CofE is larger than the average-sized primary school. It serves an area to the south of the city centre. The majority of pupils are White British. A broadly average proportion of pupils belong to a range of different minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Pakistani. Above average numbers speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. More pupils than is usual join or leave the school partway through their primary education. Children attend the Nursery class full time from the age of three years. Some pupils in five of the eight year-groups are currently taught in mixed-age classes. The school meets the current floor standard.

The school holds the Eco School Bronze Award, Healthy School status, and the Level 1 award for Dyslexia Friendly practice.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection so that pupils now make good progress. Most children's skills on entry to Nursery are far below those expected for their age. For the past two years attainment in English and mathematics for Year 6 pupils has been broadly in line with the national average, as it is currently. This represents good achievement. The challenge for the school now is to raise attainment higher.
- Teaching is of good quality overall with some that is outstanding. Pupils find lessons interesting and, in the supportive learning atmosphere, they feel confident to 'have a go'. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils have more opportunities to develop their literacy skills than their mathematical skills across the curriculum. On occasion, the level of challenge is not sufficiently well adapted to all pupils' needs.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that any, rare, instances of bullying are swiftly tackled. They describe the school as 'magnificent, exciting and helpful'. Good behaviour, both in and out of lessons, enhances the quality of pupils' learning. The school places strong emphasis on pupils showing respect for others and on the development of collaborative skills.
- Ambitious, determined leadership by the headteacher, senior teachers and the effective governing body, has driven forward the school's improvement and continues to provide very clear direction. Rigorous self-evaluation and strong teamwork ensure that the school is well aware of its strengths and areas in need of improvement. For example, the need to ensure consistency in the quality of provision for younger pupils. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive in expressing their views of the school, and very appreciative of staff's approachability. However, despite the school's efforts, too many are still reluctant to engage closely in their children's learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 to at least above average in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all teachers provide pupils, particularly the more able, with the right levels of challenge
 - delivering equally good quality provision to Reception children and pupils in Year 1 across different classes
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in other subjects
 - increasing the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Many children join the Nursery with the skills associated with much younger children, particularly their knowledge and understanding of the world and their communication and mathematical skills. At the time of the previous inspection, most children's skills were still well-below average when they joined Year 1. This is no longer the case, since the majority are now working within the expectations for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Children are enthusiastic learners who respond well to adults' questioning and suggestion. For example, while carefully bathing their 'babies' some chatted about the importance of washing regularly while, elsewhere, others confirmed their knowledge of repetitive language in traditional tales, using masks to act out the wolf and three little pigs. Children make particularly good progress in their personal development and, for example, the fine-motor skills necessary for successful writing, so the majority are well prepared to start Year 1. However, the rate of progress for pupils in Reception and Year 1 is uneven across the different classes.

Pupils continue to make good progress across the school, particularly in Years 2, 5 and 6, because they enjoy learning and think about what they are doing. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils moved seamlessly from one activity to the next, confidently volunteered ideas and all settled swiftly to work ranging from confirming the importance of accurate measurement to exploring the delights of the Fibonacci sequences. Pupils collaborate well when developing their ideas, have a good understanding of their targets for improvement, concentrate well and generally take care with the presentation of their work. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress alongside their peers. They achieve well, due to the school's early identification of their individual needs and well-targeted support. Strong support from both school and home ensures that pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least good progress. In 2011, this group of pupils achieved exceptionally well to reach above-average standards in English and mathematics. Gaps in attainment between all pupils and those known to be eligible for free school meals are also closing, particularly in English. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average although, as in writing and mathematics, fewer pupils than average nationally, reach the higher levels for

each key stage. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers concur with inspection findings that their children make good progress at Stoke Minster.

Quality of teaching

Good quality relationships, effective use of encouragement, clarity of expectations, a good variety of activities and excellent use of subject-specific language, are hallmarks of the effective teaching across the school. Planning is detailed and it builds effectively on pupils' prior work. Good use of games and interactive whiteboards helps to sustain pupils' focus and interest. Extensive opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner, and to work in small groups, successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they learn about the fairness of taking turns and the importance of respecting others' views. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and to practise their reading, writing, and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum. However, they provide fewer activities that allow pupils to develop their mathematical skills in other subjects. While always at least satisfactory, the teaching for Reception children and Year 1 pupils, including teaching of the links between letters and sounds, is of variable quality. Sometimes, weaknesses in the organisation and management of pupils lead to a slow pace and missed opportunities. In the best lessons, highly skilful teaching makes the most of every opportunity to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning through lively discussion and the links made between different subjects.

Throughout the school, teaching assistants support those who are disabled or have special educational needs effectively, as well as those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Marking is often of good quality, clearly identifying for pupils what they have done well and what they need to concentrate on next to improve. Where the teaching is particularly strong, lessons move at a good pace with activities that are finely tuned to provide all pupils, including the more-able, with high levels of challenge. In such lessons, teachers use probing questioning to tease out pupils' understanding, and they carefully monitor throughout the lesson that pupils are working to best advantage. Their enthusiasm and excellent knowledge of each pupil's abilities lead to highly effective learning. Parents and carers are accurate in their judgement that their children are taught well overall. The great majority of pupils consider that they learn a lot in lessons and know how well they are doing at school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, including those who join partway through their education and others whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, feel valued in this school. Those of different ages, abilities and ethnicity enjoy each other's company. They get on well with each other and are unfailingly polite towards adults. The overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and carers consider that, typically, behaviour is good and that the school ensures that pupils are safe. Instances of unkindness of any sort are infrequent. Playground behaviour is lively but good supervision and pupils' own self-discipline mean that, for example, younger pupils say they do not feel intimidated by older ones. Pupils are proud to belong to their school and to take on responsibilities. Members of the school council take a proactive approach to ensuring health and safety through their identification and monitoring of potential hazards around school.

Pupils understand the risks associated with the internet and also how to keep themselves safe outside school, for example, when choosing a safe place to cross the road. They are keen to contribute to the community and were thrilled when their new allotment produced a good crop for making soup and pickles at harvest time. In response to the school's sustained actions, attendance is average and the great majority of pupils arrive punctually at school.

Leadership and management

The comment from a member of staff that, 'I love working here', is great tribute to the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management. All staff work together as a strong team that is inspired by the headteacher's vision and example and has taken great strides forward over the past four years. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of provision, combined with termly tracking of pupils' progress, underpins all decision making. The encouragement of staff members to further their expertise, combined with good access to continuous professional development, leads to a community where high expectation mixes effectively with mutual support. Members of the governing body are well informed about the school through, for example, their links to different subjects and areas of school life, such as the provision for pupils who have special educational needs. The school runs smoothly and good financial management has turned a deficit budget into a healthy carry-forward. There is good capacity for the school to improve further.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Policies and training for staff are up to date. The school works closely with external agencies to provide support for pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is evident in, for example, the closing of the attainment gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils. Leaders' annual review of the curriculum ensures that pupils in mixed-age classes do not have gaps in their development of skills. Enrichments, such as visits and extra-curricular activities, plus access to, for example, specialist teaching of Spanish and musical tuition, add enjoyment and broaden pupils' horizons. Consistent, positive behaviour management, sensitive choice of subject matter and encouragement that pupils reflect on their learning and their attitudes, promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Typical of the views of parents and carers are that, 'My child loves coming to school and is progressing very well,' and, 'Staff are very dedicated and always treat parents with respect.' The school works assiduously, for example, through the provision of family learning days and workshops, to encourage parents and carers to play a more active part in their children's education. As yet, only a few have taken up such opportunities or support their children's homework through, for example, hearing them read at home. This hampers their children's ability to make the optimum progress in their learning.

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).

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.
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.



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Stoke Minster CofE Aided Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 4EE**

My inspection colleagues and I enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you for your warm welcome and politeness. Particular thanks should go to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to talk with us. You helped us to make the judgement that Stoke Minster is a good school. Here are some of the reasons why.

Your good behaviour and relationships with each other and adults create a happy environment in which, you told us, you feel safe and well supported. Your teachers provide you with interesting things to do in lessons and help you to understand how to improve your work. All the adults work well together in your best interest. The senior teachers evaluate carefully how well things are going, a bit like you self-evaluate your work, and their well-chosen actions have made sure that the school has improved well since it was last inspected.

From the Nursery class to Year 6, you make good progress in your learning so that most of you reach average standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave school. Some of you reach higher levels but we think that more of you can do so. So, we have asked the senior teachers to help you do this and we have given them some pointers about how they might go about it. These include: making sure the work always offers you enough challenge; giving you more opportunities to practise your numeracy skills in other subjects; persuading more of your parents and carers to help you with your learning at home. Obviously, you are going to have to work hard as well – it's a good thing that you showed us how much you enjoy learning! We were impressed by how good you are at bouncing ideas off each other to move your learning forward, and how hard you think about your work. This letter comes with our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake
Lead inspector

