

Steeple Claydon School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110248
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	378068
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
Lead inspector	Jacqueline Marshall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Roberts
Headteacher	Rebecca Ellers
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jacqueline Marshall

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons, taught by seven teachers. She held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, school leaders and representatives of the governing body as well as talking with parents and carers before and during the inspection. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at the school's documentation, for example policies, including those relating to safeguarding, data on pupils' progress, attendance figures and the school's improvement planning. She scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated an above average response of 82 questionnaires received from parents and carers, 51 from Key Stage 2 pupils and 11 from staff.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school with a rising number on roll. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage; others pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. A higher proportion of pupils than usual join or leave the school at other than the expected times. The school meets the government's current floor standard. Almost all the current teaching staff and senior leaders were appointed in 2010 as well as key posts in the governing body.

The school has a nursery which is run by the governing body and under the leadership of the headteacher. This was inspected in summer 2011. There is a children's centre based on site which has been inspected separately.

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. Pupils’ achieve well and make good progress because they have a clear understanding of how well they are doing, what they need to do to get even better and where they are aiming next.
- Teaching in the school has improved since the previous inspection and is now good with teachers making effective use of assessments in English and mathematics to plan well-matched activities and set targets. Where teaching is outstanding every opportunity is used to engage and challenge all the pupils, including at the start or end of lessons when the whole class are together. Where this is not yet a consistent feature, pace and learning dip.
- Throughout the school the teaching of phonics is thorough. The careful planning observed showed how well the pupils’ confidence in, and skill at, reading is enhanced as they move up the school. Progress in writing and mathematics is also good. However, teachers do not always set clear expectations so that pupils can transfer and consistently use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum to accelerate their progress further. Similarly, some opportunities are missed to create a word-rich environment that encourages the youngest children to write independently whenever they are learning through play.
- The well-organised curriculum enables the pupils to enjoy an extensive range of activities which promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. The school is beginning to make sure that the effective use of assessment when planning learning in English and mathematics is also seen throughout the curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy their whole time in the school and their attendance is consistently above average. Their behaviour and attitudes are good, and at times exemplary. The overwhelming majority of parents, carers and pupils all agree that the school is thorough in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure.
- The extremely determined leadership of the headteacher, supported well by senior leaders and the governing body, has driven the school forward quickly, securing key improvements, despite the many staff changes since the time of the previous inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure standards in English and mathematics are consistently above average by:
 - making sure pupils practise and use their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts in other subjects
 - providing increased opportunities for pupils to write independently, especially for the youngest children.

- Transfer the good use of assessment in English and mathematics lessons to all areas of the curriculum in order to plan work that systematically builds pupils' skills and accelerates progress in all areas of learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils join the school with skills and knowledge that are below the expected levels for their age, but there are many variations within the cohorts. They are generally weaker in communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and number development. Throughout the school, all groups of pupils, including those who have recently joined the school and those eligible for free school meals, achieve well. School records show, since the changes to the school leadership and staffing in 2010, pupils make good progress. Inspection evidence confirms that in English and mathematics all pupils, regardless of their ability, special educational needs or any disabilities, achieve well. Attainment in English, including reading, and mathematics has been average by the time pupils leave school compared to their peers nationally. However, the rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress and target setting have accelerated progress since 2010. Consequently, work in books and the school's data show that the current Year 6 pupils are working at above average levels in mathematics, writing and reading.

Effective organisation and careful assessments enable children to make good progress quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. Children use the skills they learn in phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make) as they write. However, they do not always have sufficient opportunities as they play to practise and consolidate these skills and write independently. Consequently, for some writing remains a weaker area as they join Year 1. This overall solid start is built upon well so that, by the time they leave the school, pupils are achieving well. Pupils' standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average.

Across the school pupils are clear about their learning, talk with confidence and share their ideas willingly with one another. Pupils of all ages talk eagerly about what they have been learning and know they have targets. They have a particularly good

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understanding of how well they are doing and just what they need to do to improve. Highly successful target cards and regular 'me time' meetings with staff as well as comments teachers make when marking work engage them very effectively in the next steps in their learning. 'Lead learners', who were appointed for the first time in the autumn term, are extremely proud of their role. They explain how they support other pupils in the school, modelling good learning to younger pupils and setting a good example to all. Parents and carers expressed a high level of satisfaction in the progress their children make and how well the school enables them to be involved in their children's learning. Inspectors endorse these views.

Quality of teaching

The teaching observed on the inspection was typically good, and occasionally outstanding. The vast majority of parents and carers agree that this is the case. Staff prepare lessons carefully matching the work well to pupils' different needs and linking different aspects of learning. They use learning resources effectively to assist the pupils' understanding. Teachers' good knowledge of the content they teach enables them to pose questions effectively and also answer pupils' questions fully. Classrooms are welcoming, interesting and attractive environments which support learning well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the range of activities for the outdoor and indoor areas enhances different aspects of the children's development well. Lessons on the whole are very well paced with good use of time. Occasionally when talking to the whole class together, opportunities to adapt questioning and tasks to reflect the differing abilities are missed and as a result learning dips.

Throughout the school, staff have good strategies to manage behaviour. The interesting activities and very good relationships between staff and pupils keep the pupils focused. Teachers regularly use paired talk which supports their speaking and listening skills effectively and also their social development through negotiating ideas. Marking is helpful and supports the pupils' next steps in learning. Staff keep good records of pupils' progress and use them to ensure pupils are well challenged in most lessons. Learning objectives, steps to success and knowledge of the levels they are working at are shared well with pupils, and staff are consistent in ensuring that the pupils know how to be successful in their tasks.

The impact of the curriculum is good and communication skills are well developed through the teaching approach. Teaching of basic skills is effective though pupils are not always regularly given sufficient opportunities to use and develop these literacy and numeracy skills consistently as they work in other subjects. Teachers organise lessons so there is an interesting range of activities to keep pupils' attention. They take every opportunity to thread the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into their teaching. Developing the use of assessment to better target and challenge pupils in the wider curriculum has already started in some subjects though is less well developed in others.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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The school's positive promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key factor in pupils' above average attendance and good and sometimes exemplary behaviour. Pupils respond well to the support of adults working with them, particularly in small target groups and on a one-to-one basis. Parents and carers praise the approach of teaching staff and additional adults alike, commenting, 'staff are caring and supportive' and 'embrace new and innovative ways of learning, which encourages children to think outside the box and become receptive to new ideas'.

Due to school leaders' effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils get on well together and show considerable support for one another, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Links with schools in Blackburn and Sierra Leone give the pupils good opportunities to find out about the lives and learning of other pupils around the world and from other backgrounds. Incidents of bullying are rare, indeed pupils during the inspection were adamant that it 'absolutely doesn't happen'. They are keen to explain how they would deal with a range of types of bullying and know exactly who to turn to for help if they need to. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire commented positively on how the school deals with behaviour and a very large majority of pupils agreed that behaviour is good. Initiatives such as the 'lead learners' also contribute positively to pupils' good moral and social development and are highly regarded by the pupils.

Leadership and management

Good leadership and a focus on the correct priorities have resulted in significant improvement since the previous inspection. The whole-school commitment to do the best for the pupils is clearly evident in the strength of relationships and the staff's dedication to their work. They constantly look to develop their own skills further through professional development as well as identifying additional needs as a result of rigorous monitoring. The governing body brings a wide range of skills to its role and takes specific responsibilities. Governors challenge and ask questions. Their visits to school keep them fully aware of the school's development. School self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The school improvement plan focuses clearly on raising standards even further. Rising achievement, the significant improvement since the previous inspection, the commitment of staff and governors, together with the clear vision of leaders, indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The good curriculum is well planned with a secure focus on key areas of learning. It meets pupils' needs well. The introduction of the multi-media suite and a new curriculum has enabled staff to ensure different subjects are integrated together in a natural way, while still checking to make sure all aspects of subjects, such as science, are covered. The range of extra-curricular clubs is really enjoyed by the pupils. They benefit from sporting opportunities which support their healthy lifestyles. The good use of the local environment enables the pupils to learn at first hand. Projects such as the development of an area in the village for Forest School activities and close links with the National Trust at nearby Claydon House extend the

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school's learning environment very successfully. They also assist the acquisition of pupils' knowledge and support their understanding well. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly; developing links in the local and wider community to enhance pupils' learning is a strong feature of the school's philosophy.

Close attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure that the safeguarding for the pupils is robust and secure. This includes rigorous procedures for ensuring the care of pupils through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. Pupils' safety and well-being are paramount at all times, ensuring that the school is a very safe and supportive place to be. The senior managers, supported well by all staff, are particularly effective in tackling discrimination should it occur and in ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils and across all aspects of the school's work.

Substantial changes since the appointment of the current leadership team have been commented on by parents and carers, several citing 'noticeable' and 'phenomenal' progress over the past 18 months in the school's effectiveness. While a very small minority of parents and carers feel that communication between themselves and the school could improve, the vast majority are positive about this aspect of the school's work.

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.
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.



9 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Steeple Claydon School, Buckingham MK18 2PA

Thank you for talking to me and showing me your work when I visited your school. I was pleased to hear from talking to you, and from your responses in the questionnaires you answered, that you like school and how much you enjoy all that the teachers plan for you. I agree that you get along well and look out for one another. I think your school gives you the right help so that you know how to behave well and keep safe. Your attendance is above average – well done!

The inspection found that Steeple Claydon is a good school. The curriculum planned for you meets your needs well and teachers are good at helping you make good progress in your work. The leaders in the school know just what needs to be done to make sure your school keeps on getting better. In order to help you to reach even higher levels, we have asked the staff at your school to do two things.

- Make sure that you use what you have learnt in English and mathematics lessons whenever you use your writing or numeracy skills in other subjects and that you have lots of opportunities to practise your writing.
- Check how well you are doing in all your subjects so that teachers can plan activities across the curriculum that help you develop your skills and understanding at the same pace as you do in literacy and numeracy.

You can all help by continuing to respect others' values. Thank you again for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall
Lead inspector

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