

Stoke Gabriel Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113221
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	378668
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Rowena Onions

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	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Salt
Headteacher	Heather Boote
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rowena Onions

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Nine lessons were seen and five teachers and some teaching assistants were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at data about pupils' progress. In addition, she considered the school improvement plan, reports from the local authority and a range of other documentation. Fifty-five responses to the parents' and carers' questionnaire were received and analysed, together with responses from 50 pupils and nine staff.

Information about the school

This much smaller-than-average-sized primary school serves its local area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A below average percentage of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs. Pupils' special educational needs include specific and moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. With the exception of those in Year 2, pupils, including those in the Reception Year, are taught in classes covering two age groups. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Since November 2011, the school has been part of the Totnes Federation of Village Schools. This is a group of six schools who has a single governing body. The federation has a co-leadership structure, within which each school has its own headteacher. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has experienced a period of turbulence caused by the unavoidable long-term absence of two of the five teaching staff. At the time of this inspection, stability of staffing had been regained.

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 by Year 6 attain above average standards. The school is not outstanding because although already strong in some subjects in some year groups, pupils' progress remains good, rather than outstanding, in others.
- Teachers strive to make lessons interesting. The organisation of the curriculum, whereby learning in English and mathematics is often linked to the class topic, supports this well. Consequently, most pupils express enthusiasm for school and learning. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn in a lesson but occasionally activities are not as closely linked to this targeted learning as they should be.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. In lessons, they behave in a way that allows them to concentrate well and others to learn. Pupils are clear that there is very little deliberate bad behaviour in or around school. However, a number feels that the boisterousness of some play in the playground makes them feel less comfortable at playtimes than they would like to be.
- The headteacher leads the school well. The performance management of teaching is good, ensuring an increasing number of pupils are making better than expected progress. The monitoring of teaching is, however, not yet sufficiently precise in identifying exactly what each teacher needs to do to raise their practice from good to outstanding.
- There are clear systems by which parents and carers can express opinions about the school either in person or anonymously. There is evidence that the headteacher and governors take these concerns seriously and act upon them where appropriate. Nevertheless, some parents feel their concerns are not responded to sufficiently well. With the exception of issues about playtime, the concerns raised by parents were not supported by inspection evidence. However, restoring parents' confidence in feeling that their concerns are given due importance is an area that the school needs to address.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of pupils who make outstanding progress by:

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- ensuring that in lessons all activities link closely to the targeted learning
 - showing with greater precision what each teacher needs to do to lift their teaching to outstanding.
- Restore the full confidence of parents and carers by:
- ensuring all pupils are comfortable with being in the playground at playtimes
 - seeking ways of reassuring parents and carers that their concerns are taken seriously and are acted upon where appropriate.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make at least good progress throughout the school. In some subjects, in some year groups, for example in mathematics in Year 6, writing in Year 4, and reading in Year 2, pupils' progress is already outstanding. Overall, pupils achieve well in learning to read. By the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils in Year 2 have good skills in decoding words and most read with fluency and enjoyment. By Year 6, pupils have a level of skill that allows them to read for meaning in a variety of contexts. Their level of skill in spoken communication, writing and mathematics also supports their wider learning well. Year 6 pupils have, for example, set up a 'toast at break' business with a board of directors, a business plan and accounts. The great majority of parents and carers agree their children are making good progress and pupils are confident they are helped to steadily improve.

Children's progress in the Reception Year has accelerated significantly over the last year and it is now good. The children are all on track to meet or exceed the expectation for their age by the end of the year. They demonstrate their developing skills through, for example, independently composing and writing a short message in a Mothers' Day card or counting the number of hops it takes them to move from one outdoor activity to another. Throughout the school, pupils generally work with diligence and enthusiasm. In a Years 3 and 4 lesson, for example, pupils worked hard and with speed to identify the features of different types of letters, finding the work engaging because of the variety of examples they had been given to analyse. Challenging work successfully promotes the progress of more-able pupils. This enables them to achieve well and means that a few in Year 6 are attaining at the highest levels. The small number of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are well supported and almost all reach the expected level for their age by the end of Year 6. Developments to support a number of pupils with social and emotional difficulties are paying dividends, successfully promoting their personal well-being and their good, and sometimes outstanding, educational progress.

Quality of teaching

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A large majority of parents and carers believes that teaching in the school is good and inspection evidence supports that view. Teachers strive to make lessons interesting and relevant. The organisation of the curriculum, whereby learning in English and mathematics is often linked to the current class topic, supports this well. Teachers understand the need to make lessons active and pupils appreciate opportunities to undertake practical activities. In a Years 1 and 2 lesson, for example, a range of activities which gave pupils the opportunity to handle and discuss shapes effectively, promoted their ability to use precise mathematical language. An emphasis on developing pupils' ability to collaborate with others is helping to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. The focus on improving teachers' ability to use questioning to promote learning has been very successful, especially in developing pupils' thinking skills. In a Years 5 and 6 lesson, for example, pupils were encouraged to think more widely about possible ways of expressing the time that had elapsed since they were born. This type of approach has been particularly important in the work that has been done to improve the progress of more-able pupils. Pupils experiencing difficulties in any lesson are sensitively helped by both the teacher and teaching assistants. The ability to ask for help, and be sure it will be forthcoming, is an aspect of their lessons that pupils singled out as being particularly strong.

Teachers use the assessments they make of pupils' attainments well in planning lessons that challenge pupils of different levels of ability. There is good emphasis placed on pupils understanding what they are expected to learn in a lesson, thus helping them concentrate their efforts. Clear teaching and good reference to the overall objective for the lesson promote learning well. There are occasions, however, when teachers, in their anxiety to make lessons interesting, plan some activities in parts of lessons that do not fully promote the target learning. It is at these times that pupils' interest and concentration, which are at other times strong, have a tendency to drop, reducing the overall impact of the teaching. Pupils are provided with clear feedback about how well they are doing in school and how they could further improve, both orally and through marking.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils confirmed that the good behaviour seen during the inspection was normal for the school. Pupils have been very successfully encouraged to want to be challenged and to learn rapidly, and their attention only flags when they are unsure of the point of an activity or feel it is not moving them forward. The school is, however, correct in wanting to promote outstanding learning, through the further development of skills such as self and peer assessment.

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree with the pupils that behaviour around school is good overall, but a significant number also commented that this is not always the case in the playground. Observations during the inspection showed that play is often very boisterous. Pupils were clear that there is very little deliberately naughty or aggressive behaviour in the playground and observations confirmed this. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, but say bullying of any

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description is very rare and that they are happy that incidents of any unkind behaviour are dealt with appropriately. Despite the reservations a few have about playtime, pupils report feeling safe and secure in school, an opinion with which most parents and carers agree.

Leadership and management

The school team works together with clear vision to make the school as effective as it can be. The needs of the pupils are at the heart of this vision. Leaders and managers, in particular the headteacher, have been diligent in seeking ways in which the school can move forward. The monitoring of school work and resultant self-evaluation are accurate and lead to well aimed school development. Work to improve marking and questioning, for example, has had positive effect and has served to improve teaching and thus increase the number of pupils making better than expected progress. It is particularly notable that the school's leadership has ensured that pupils continued to make good progress despite the recent turbulence in staffing. The curriculum has been carefully developed to ensure good development of basic skills as well as to successfully interest and motivate pupils. Children in the Reception Year receive a lively, well-planned programme of work encompassing work both indoors and out. Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is promoted effectively, both through the curriculum and through the strong emphasis on care for the individual. Pupils' understanding of cultural diversity, especially in the United Kingdom, is more limited.

The good use made of the data about individual pupils' progress ensures that any potential underachievement is rapidly identified and actions are planned to prevent this. The success of this ensures that any form of discrimination is tackled and that equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. The safeguarding of pupils is strong and is focused on the well-being of all, including some pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. The team work and record of improvements demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain improvement in the future. The move to federation means that teachers and leaders are able to share expertise and thus build capacity to improve still further. The new federation governing body is using the expertise of personnel from the separate school governing bodies. Systems are already in place to ensure governors have knowledge of each school, so that they can continue to support and challenge in the effective way that the single school governing body did in the past.

The school has good systems by which it communicates with parents and carers through, for example, regular curriculum information, newsletters and termly opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with teachers. There are appropriate systems for ensuring parents can express suggestions and concerns. The school issues regular questionnaires, has an open-door policy, a post box that parents and carers can use if they have worries they wish to communicate anonymously and a clear complaints procedure. Despite this, there remains unease amongst a few parents as to whether their views are sufficiently well addressed.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stoke Gabriel Primary School, Totnes TQ9 6ST

I really enjoyed my time in your school and one of the highlights was talking to you. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you that yours is a good school.

These are some of the things I liked best.

- You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and by Year 6 attain above average standards.
- You use your literacy and numeracy skills well when you are learning about things linked to other subjects.
- You receive good teaching that helps you to be interested in what you are doing.
- You behave well, work hard in class and want to succeed.
- Everyone in school takes good care of you. This makes you feel safe and secure.
- Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body are working hard to make sure that your school gets even better as quickly as possible.

To make things even better I have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do two things.

- Help each teacher know how to help you to make even better progress, including by making sure that everything you are asked to do in lessons is closely linked to the lesson's learning objective.
- Make sure your parents are confident that your school is doing its best for you. In particular, to help all of you to be happy and comfortable in the playground.

I am sure you will be able to help by making some good suggestions as to ways in which playtimes can be better organised.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Onions
Lead inspector

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