

# Stonham Aspal Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124772
<b>Local Authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	359768
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Preston

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>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Howsom
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Hesketh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	The Street Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket IP14 6AF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01449 711346
<b>Fax number</b>	01449 711078
<b>Email address</b>	ad.stonham.p@talk21.com

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed seven teachers in 14 lessons. Meetings were held with governors, groups of pupils and

- staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices and the school's self-evaluation and development planning. They also considered the questionnaire responses from 67 parents and carers and 87 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which improved tracking and use of intervention strategies are effective in helping to ensure that all pupils make at least sufficient progress.
- The effectiveness of measures taken to improve the quality of teaching and assessment.
- The impact of recent changes in school leadership.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, given some variation in outcomes and perceived weaknesses in provision.

## Information about the school

Stonham Aspal is an average-sized school that serves the village and surrounding area. Most pupils are of White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased steadily and is now in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who join or leave partway through their primary school education is above average, in part because of the predominance of first schools in the area whose pupils move on after Year 4, and this has resulted in increased class sizes in Years 3 to 6. An independently run pre-school shares the school site, but is inspected separately. The school has gained Healthy Schools status.

**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: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Stonham Aspal is a satisfactory and improving school. Over the years it has sustained a justifiably good reputation as a welcoming and inclusive school, and is now making a concerted effort to further improve pupils' attainment and progress. This is reflected in more careful tracking of pupils' progress, good learning support and development of a new and larger school leadership team.

Throughout the school all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress, and attainment is above average in mathematics, reading and writing by Year 6. Improved provision is beginning to accelerate pupils' progress in most years. Parents and carers say emphatically that their children are secure in school, and pupils agree that they feel safe and well supported. Pupils like coming to school, as reflected in their exceptionally good attendance, and are thoughtful and considerate to others in lessons and around the school. They know that any upsets and concerns are quickly addressed and show a maturity and understanding of their classmates who have particular learning needs. Pupils enjoy an active involvement in sports and physical activities, including swimming, and have a good understanding of and commitment to healthy eating. Pupils play an active part in the school through the school council and are much involved in different charities. Pupils' good spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is well supported by engaging assemblies that encourage reflection, and links and visits that develop their appreciation of the wider world.

Pupils are very positive about their teachers, who successfully provide many interesting learning activities. However, teaching is satisfactory rather than good because activities and resources are not always sufficiently varied to provide the right level of challenge for all pupils, and particularly the most able. Teaching assistants provide effective and specific support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Much good work has been done to accurately assess and track pupils' progress and pupils feel they benefit from regular and positive marking of their work. However, there are still some weaknesses in assessment practices in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in other years, teachers make inconsistent use of targets and guidance to help pupils make better progress.

The curriculum is interesting, has a good focus on developing literacy and numeracy and is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities despite pupils coming from a wide rural catchment area. These include specialist sport coaching, lunchtime French and residential visits. Good care, support and guidance reflect the inclusive and supportive nature of the school. It is particularly successful in providing for pupils from outside the area whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, as well as integrating numerous pupils who transfer from nearby first schools.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governing body provides positive support, is generally well informed and has been particularly effective in developing

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facilities and resources over the years, although insufficient attention has been given to improving the Early Years Foundation Stage area. The headteacher has rightly focused on involving more staff in school leadership and recognises the implications this has in terms of further training and development. Recent school reviews show an accurate and realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and current action is proving effective in raising pupils' attainment. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and is suitably placed to improve further.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Ensure that all teaching consistently reflects the best practice in the school by:
  - providing more varied learning opportunities and resources that sufficiently challenge all pupils, including the most able
  - helping pupils improve their work by use of targets in books and 'next steps' guidance in marking.
- Develop the new leadership team by:
  - establishing regular and more explicit monitoring and evaluation procedures, especially for teaching and learning
  - providing relevant staff training to senior and middle leaders.
- Ensure Early Years Foundation Stage provision provides a good or better start for all pupils by:
  - establishing more secure assessment of children's standards and progress
  - improving the learning environment and resources.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**3**

Attainment on entry fluctuates considerably, but overall it is above average and the general picture is one of satisfactory achievement throughout the school. The standards observed in Years 5 and 6 in both mathematics and English were above average and show that the school has successfully addressed a dip in results in 2010. Progress in lessons is typically satisfactory and improving. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils demonstrated creativity and confidence in their story writing in a classroom with displays of high quality, well-presented written work. However, the school's efforts to raise standards are complicated by the rising number of pupils joining the school late, particularly in Key Stage 2, and sometimes with low prior attainment. The school is working effectively, through teaching and its support strategies, to ensure these and other pupils with identified additional learning needs reach their expected targets. As a result there is no significant difference in progress between different groups, although the most able pupils are not always challenged enough to fulfil their potential.

The school deals well with the small number of pupils who need extra care and attention and otherwise, behaviour is particularly good in lessons and around the school. Attendance plummeted recently during the adverse weather but in the current school year it has improved significantly to be well above average. The school has a strong ethos,

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complemented by a considerable involvement in the local community and a commitment to helping pupils develop a wider social awareness. It has not yet developed its intended range of national and international links, but pupils' experiences are enriched by various visits to other towns and areas, and by visitors to the school from different religions and countries, including Masai warriors from Kenya.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teacher-pupil relationships were good in all the lessons observed, and almost all teachers effectively manage their classes in ways that channel pupils' enthusiasm and focus their attention. Staff make good use of the electronic whiteboards and other technology to introduce and discuss new ideas with the class. Teachers plan thoroughly, and in the best lessons ensure that learning activities are appropriately challenging for the very wide range of ability in most classes. This was evident in a Year 6 mathematics class using coordinates, where pupils had different levels of work to match their different skill levels. However, there is often a reliance on pupils producing different levels of work using the same learning materials. Work is regularly marked with encouraging comments, though pupils are not always clear about how they can improve their work and the variability in marking and assessment is slowing improvements in this area.

The curriculum has for some time had considerable strengths in terms of the range of extra-curricular activities offered. Increased collaboration in curricular planning is

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developing exciting cross-curricular projects such as space travel that provide an effective means of developing literacy and numeracy skills. Phonics approaches which link letters and words to sounds are well established across the younger years and pupils have regular, scheduled access to computers to build up their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Care, guidance and support are a consistent strength of the school and reflect its inclusive ethos. The school has a range of measures to encourage attendance that have clearly proved effective. The school has been effective too in meeting the needs of an increasing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including some from outside the area who join the school with considerable personal needs.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The new leadership team has made a good start in initiating improvements and is beginning to evaluate their effectiveness, reflecting a clear and ambitious drive for improvement. The school has responded appropriately to the development points raised in the last inspection, despite the lack of a clearly defined leadership team to monitor and implement different policy initiatives. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met well, and plays an important role in maintaining the character of a community village school. Some aspects of management are good. There has been much improvement in communication, as illustrated by the now well-established and representative parents' forum, which meets with the headteacher regularly. The school makes good use of its partnerships with other agencies to ensure that pupils are protected. Regular links with the local schools consortium support staff development. The school pays good attention to ensuring that pupils have equal opportunities, welcoming pupils from a range of backgrounds and ability levels without discrimination and carefully monitoring the progress of different groups through its rigorous tracking system. The school has produced and begun implementing its community cohesion strategy. There are very strong local community links and some activities that broaden pupils' awareness of the wider society. However, this area is rightly seen by the school to be work in progress.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and experiences vary considerably when they join the reception class, and those who start in the autumn have the benefit of more learning time and the opportunity to reach higher levels. Overall, children make satisfactory progress, although they do better in creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world than in the other areas of learning. Children behave well and help each other. They enjoy being there and staff make the best use of resources to ensure a calm and supportive environment.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has ensured that all national requirements are met. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and pupil-initiated activity for most of the time, although the classroom appearance and the need to have a phonics session at the start of the day reflect a rather formal approach. Staff ensure that pupils have free movement between the indoor and outdoor learning areas, and have different learning activities that cover all areas of learning well. However, known deficiencies in resources and accommodation limit the quality of provision. For example, there are no toilets in the Early Years Foundation Stage area, and there are restrictions in the development of the indoor learning area because of a lack of accessible resources and health and safety requirements.

Despite these challenges, staff work well as a team to ensure children are safe and make progress. Parents are kept well informed and there are good and developing relationships with the nearby pre-school. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is working to improve and refine assessment procedures and provide regular planning and assessment opportunities between staff. In particular, the assessment of children's skills on entry is not yet sufficiently accurate or consistent.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are positive about the school and praise its caring and supportive ethos. A small proportion are concerned about the progress their children are making. Inspectors judged that pupils are making satisfactory progress, but are not always challenged enough in lessons. A number of parents also feel that the behaviour of a few pupils could be better in some instances. Inspectors found behaviour to be good in all lessons and around the school. There has been an increase in the number of pupils with particular personal and behavioural concerns and on occasion these can be distracting. However, they are handled well by teachers and support staff.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stonham Aspal Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 193 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	55	29	43	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	42	39	58	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	46	31	46	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	43	32	48	6	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	46	34	51	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	34	38	57	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	39	37	55	3	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	35	52	26	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	33	43	64	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	28	38	57	7	10	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	25	46	69	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	36	36	54	4	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	58	27	40	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and 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 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.

**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 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Stonham Aspal Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Stowmarket, IP14 6AF**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. It gives you a satisfactory education, and ensures that most of you achieve appropriately by the time you leave. The school makes a considerable effort to ensure you are safe and we were pleased to see that you behave well and work together in lessons. We were pleased with what the school is doing to help you develop healthy lifestyles and how well you have responded. It is good to see that you are able to swim and for most of you to be involved in different sports.

All of your parents and carers told us how much you enjoy school and you certainly show this in your lessons and excellent attendance. You get on well with your teachers and support staff. They plan different projects and activities that make your learning interesting as well as helping you to make progress. We have asked the school to help some of you make even better progress by giving you more challenging tasks in lessons. In our talks with you we noted that some of you were not clear about what you had to do to reach your targets in writing and mathematics. We have therefore asked the school make sure your targets are clearly displayed inside your books and regularly updated. We also feel that the resources in the Reception class area should be made more interesting and varied to help children make better progress in their development. A final recommendation is to develop the new school leadership team to support your headteacher in running the school.

The headteacher, the governing body and all the staff are working hard to further improve your school. You can all help by working hard, keeping up your excellent attendance and continuing to take an active part in the life of the school.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead inspector

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