

Starcross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113219
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357293
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Hope
Headteacher	Iannis Ireland
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed the teaching of eight teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, an adviser from the local authority and groups of pupils. They also observed the school's work including an assembly, playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors also looked at a range of evidence, including data on pupils' progress, pupils' work, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, minutes of meetings and information on the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Questionnaire responses from 98 parents and carers, 92 pupils and 19 staff were also analysed.

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

- The progress of more capable pupils and of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The impact of recent changes in teaching and assessment, as indicated in the school's self-evaluation, and whether these have resulted in pupils making faster progress in mathematics and English.
- The impact of strategies to help improve literacy, particularly on boys' attainment in writing.
- How well leaders evaluate the success of strategies designed to raise pupils' attainment.

Information about the school

Starcross Primary School is of smaller than average size. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly associated with the acquisition of language, literacy and numeracy skills. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The school has a pre-school, an after-school provision and holiday provision which is managed by an independent provider. In response to a fall in the school's roll, the number of classes for pupils in Years 3 to 6 was reduced from four to three in September 2010.

In recognition of its work, the school has gained Healthy Schools status, the Devon Healthy Lifestyles Award and the Gold Award for its travel plan.

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

2

Main findings

Starcross Primary School provides a satisfactory and strongly improving quality of education. It is a happy school and the high standard of care helps pupils to feel safe and valued. Pupils' behaviour is good and they play an active part in the life of the school and in the wider community. They develop good interpersonal skills which prepare them well for their future role in society. Strong links have been established with parents and carers, as well as with other partners which enrich the curriculum.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Several initiatives have been introduced which are successfully tackling previous weaknesses in numeracy and literacy. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in attainment, particularly in boys' writing. It is too early for the impact of these changes to be reflected fully in pupils' achievement. Some inconsistency remains in the teaching of pupils who are at the early stages of developing handwriting and the school has recently updated its literacy policy to strengthen this aspect of its work.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and has some good and outstanding features. Lessons often include a good variety of activities and the use of imaginative resources. In some lessons the more capable pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work at a faster pace and to develop their own ideas. Teachers often use assessment information well to check pupils' progress and to ensure work is set at the right level. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across all classes and marking is not always used effectively to help pupils improve their work. A wide range of support, based on a thorough assessment of their needs, ensures pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures children settle quickly and make good progress.

The headteacher is ably supported by a strong team of senior leaders who have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Data are used effectively to check how well different groups of pupils are making progress, although the use of this information to evaluate the impact of individual initiatives on raising standards is not fully developed. Good self-evaluation, coupled with a determination to raise standards, has led to significant improvements since the last inspection. These improvements are demonstrated by, for example, the better quality of care, guidance and support and the more effective provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pace of improvement and strength of leadership demonstrate the school has a good capacity for further improvement. The governing body receives regular reports on the school's performance although its knowledge of how to challenge and evaluate the work of the school is underdeveloped.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring greater consistency across classes in the use of assessment information and marking
 - implementing the recently updated literacy policy
 - providing more opportunities for the most-able pupils to work at a faster pace and to develop their own ideas.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - evaluating the impact of recently introduced initiatives to ensure that they are continuing to raise standards in numeracy and literacy
 - strengthening the governing body's knowledge of how to challenge and evaluate the school's performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with the national average. Following a drop in attainment in 2010, particularly in mathematics and in boys' writing, the school introduced a range of strategies which have resulted in pupils making accelerated progress. Data on pupils' current attainment, together with the observation of learning and progress in lessons, confirm previous weaker areas are being tackled successfully and pupils are making satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils enjoy their education and their achievement is satisfactory overall, although some of the more-able pupils do not gain the higher levels in national tests of which they are capable. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, especially in developing their literacy skills, because they receive support which takes close account of their academic and emotional needs.

Pupils' learning in the classroom is satisfactory overall and occasionally better. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their ideas in pairs or in small groups, which helps to develop their language and interpersonal skills. In a few lessons, there is a strong focus on independent learning, for example when pupils in Years 5 and 6 used information and communication technology to research the effects of the Tsunami. However, this aspect of learning is not yet established fully across all classes.

Pupils' personal development is good. They learn to contribute to the school and wider community, for example through serving on the school council, organising playground equipment, helping to improve the environment, raising funds for charities and by participating in local music and sports festivals. Pupils develop skills which prepare them well for future work and citizenship, for example through the school's economic awareness programme, presenting topics at the school forum or answering the school telephone. Regular opportunities for physical exercise, healthy lunches and topics in the personal, social and health education curriculum promote pupils' good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle. ♦♦

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in all classes and sometimes good or outstanding. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils, offering praise and encouragement, and classrooms provide attractive environments for learning. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons and settle quickly to their work. In the best lessons, a clear introduction enables pupils to start learning quickly and practical activities reinforce their understanding. In a few lessons the pace is too slow and planning does not focus sufficiently on what pupils are expected to learn. Highly skilled teaching assistants give good support to pupils through leading small groups, or providing individual support. Teachers have improved their use of assessment information recently and have an accurate picture of pupils' attainment. Pupils are generally aware of their targets for improvement and feel they have the right level of challenge. The use of marking is variable. In the best examples it is detailed and encourages pupils to reflect on their learning. Where marking is less effective pupils do not always follow up suggestions on how they might improve their work. The assessment and identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very good because it takes place at an early age and identifies pupils' specific language, literacy or numeracy difficulties.

The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects and has been improved recently to take closer account of pupils' needs and interests. In English, the range of books has been extended to help improve boys' literacy and in mathematics greater use is made of

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practical activities. The recent reorganisation of classes for pupils in Years 3 to 6 has resulted in classes containing pupils of differing ages. Planning is in place for the current year and longer term planning is being developed to ensure pupils are taught an appropriate variety of topics as they move through the school. Partnerships with other schools and the local community are used well to enhance the curriculum, particularly in music, physical education and art. A high proportion of pupils attend the after-school clubs and Year 6 pupils take part in an annual residential trip to Wales. ♦♦

Parents and carers appreciate the high standard of care provided by the school. In the words of one parent, 'I feel my child is happy and well looked after.' Pupils report that they feel safe, adults are approachable and that any concerns are dealt with quickly. Staff know individual pupils well and ensure that those who need it get additional support, for example from speech and language therapists or from the individual sessions provided by teaching assistants. Strong links with pre-schools and with schools in the local partnership ensure children settle well on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and that pupils are well prepared for when they leave the school. Thorough procedures for following up absences have a positive impact on pupils' above average attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides an approachable and inclusive style of leadership which helps pupils, parents and carers and staff contribute fully to the life of the school. Senior leaders and staff at all levels are ambitious for the school's improvement and morale is high. Good management of teaching and learning is bringing about improvements in classroom practice.

Equal opportunity is promoted effectively and the performance and participation of different groups are monitored closely. Recent steps taken to rectify underperformance include the enhanced support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the revised curriculum to promote boys' literacy. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet all the requirements. The school has good plans to promote community cohesion. Strong links exist with the local community and pupils correspond by email with schools in France and Uganda. The annual residential trips takes place alongside a school from a city which includes pupils with a more diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds. The governing body is supportive of the school and ensures all statutory requirements are met. ♦

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These are the grades for leadership and management


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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities which are broadly as expected for their age, although a significant minority are below typical expectations, particularly in their emotional development and in their communication and language development. There is variation on entry from year to year in the proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for children are good because they thrive in the caring and well-organised environment. Children make good progress across the majority of areas of learning, and leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with a good level of development. However, writing remains a relative weakness and staff are addressing this through providing greater opportunities for talking and by developing children's fine motor skills to enable them to physically write.

There are very good arrangements for settling children into school, excellent relationships with parents and carers, and good attention to children's welfare. Assessment has identified children's social and emotional development as a priority and as a result, staff have made changes to the environment to promote this aspect of children's development. Behaviour is good and children work together well. An extensive and stimulating range of activities is provided, both indoors and outside, that covers all the areas of learning. Activities capture children's interest and promote very effective learning through problem solving and exploration. Staff use detailed assessment and observation to plan activities that meet children's needs.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is led and managed well. Staff are  trained effectively and liaise closely with external agencies such as pre-schools, speech and language therapy services and the local learning partnership. Staff use continuous self-

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evaluation to recognise where there are strengths and areas for further development and plan effectively for improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school's work. They are particularly pleased that the school provides a safe and happy environment for their children and that those who need additional help get the support they need. A very small number of parents and carers raised concerns about communication with the school and about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found pupils' behaviour was good and that the school had good arrangements for communicating with parents and carers which it had strengthened recently, for example through the use of text messaging.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Starcross 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	63	31	32	4	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	63	64	33	34	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	32	54	55	9	9	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	47	45	46	4	4	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	53	54	37	38	3	3	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	42	45	46	8	8	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	44	52	53	1	1	1	1
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)	38	39	49	50	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	35	53	54	8	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	41	47	48	7	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	33	54	55	3	3	4	4
The school is led and managed effectively	45	46	44	45	2	2	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	55	36	37	5	5	1	1

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).

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Starcross Primary School, Exeter EX6 8QD

Recently I visited your school with two other inspectors. We enjoyed our visit very much and thought it was a happy school. Thanks to those of you who also took time to talk to us about your work and life at school. We also talked to the teachers, visited lessons, looked at your work and took account of the views of your parents and carers to find out how your school is doing. Here are the main points.

- Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education and is getting better.
- You enjoy coming to school and make satisfactory progress with your learning.
- Those of you who join the school in the Reception class make a good start to your education.
- The school helps you develop a good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle.
- You get on well with each other and your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- You play a big part in school life, for example by organising playground equipment or serving on the school council.
- Those of you who have difficulties with your learning get good support.
- Adults run the school well and make sure you receive the right level of care to make you feel safe.
- The school works closely with your parents and carers who are very pleased with the school.

I have asked the school to do a few things to help it get better.

- Give more help to those of you who need to improve your writing and give more opportunities for some of you to develop your own ideas.
- Make better use of marking to help you improve your work.
- Check how well you are learning in English and mathematics.
- Make sure that adults who run the school check in more detail how well the school is working.

You can all help by always trying your hardest and talking to teachers about how you might improve your work. Thank you once again for your help during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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