

Stoke Mandeville Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110249
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356712
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ramsey
Headteacher	Matt Ashmead
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
School address	Lower Road Stoke Mandeville Aylesbury HP22 5XA
Telephone number	01296612371
Fax number	01296615038
Email address	office@stokemandeville.bucks.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Inspection number	356712

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed nine teaching staff while visiting 14 lessons. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders, teaching staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking information, minutes of governing body meetings, arrangements for safeguarding and pupils' work. Staff and pupil questionnaires were also scrutinised, along with 92 completed by parents and carers.

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

- The progress made by the pupils, particularly the boys, in reading and writing at Key Stage 1.
- The progress made by pupils in mathematics and their attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.
- How well pupils with hearing impairment progress throughout the school.
- The pupils' awareness of other cultures and backgrounds.

Information about the school

Stoke Mandeville is smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that seen nationally. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Currently there are 10 pupils in the school's hearing impaired unit, most of who come from outside the school's immediate catchment area. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a single Reception class. There is an early morning drop-in club managed by the governing body. The school has several awards reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles and holds the Eco-Schools Silver award.

There have been significant changes to the leadership of the school since the last inspection. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2010, following the sudden death of the previous post holder. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in April 2011.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Stoke Mandeville provides a good education. The school has been through a period of significant leadership changes over the past 18 months. However, it is testament to the good leadership provided by the senior leaders and governing body that the school maintained high staff morale and made good improvements during this period. The views of one parent are typical of many when commenting, 'Significant improvements over the last 12 months, sensitive, positive and planned approach to ensuring children learn, enjoy and develop in their environment. Well done to Head and dedicated team.'

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress from their starting point. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make good progress overall, leaving with levels of attainment that are above average in both English and mathematics. Progress has been accelerated in mathematics due to effective interventions, improved teaching and much clearer tracking of pupils' progress. Pupils with hearing impairments make progress in line with their peers, the result of a combination of good in-class support and, where appropriate, small group sessions. Other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress, the result of improved identification of their needs and well-targeted support, care and guidance. The improved tracking procedures have enabled the school to focus effectively on reducing the gap in the rates of progress made by boys and girls at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Teaching has improved; it is usually at least good and there is some exemplary practice. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well so that lessons are not disrupted. They assess the pupils' progress well and plan work that is matched well to pupils' prior learning, ensuring mostly good progress. Learning support assistants are utilised well, ensuring good support for those pupils who find learning difficult and for those with hearing impairment. Where teaching is not as good, pupils spend too long listening to instructions and occasionally, more-able pupils do not get on with more challenging work soon enough in lessons.

Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance and good behaviour. They enjoy school because teachers plan a rich and vibrant curriculum where learning is exciting. For example, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils arrived back at the school after the Easter break to find the usually tidy courtyard 'littered' with numerous car parts. This was a precursor to a wide range of writing, creative, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) activities based on 'The Iron Man', which really stimulated pupils' enthusiasm. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs. While pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, their awareness of people from other backgrounds is relatively weak.

The senior leaders have quickly established itself as an effective unit, correctly identifying priorities. Self-evaluation is rigorous and the focus on improving pupils' progress,

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

particularly in mathematics, has been effective. Monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior leaders and subject leaders has been effective in identifying best practice and in increasing the amount of good teaching. The development of comprehensive systems of tracking and assessment of pupils' progress enable early and systematic interventions to be implemented. This has helped to sustain the good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governance is strong and has provided stability and expertise during changes of senior staff. While there are good links with parents, too little feedback is provided about homework and its purpose. The rigour of self-evaluation, improvements to the curriculum, and teaching and learning show the school is well placed to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching further so that it is at least good in all year groups by ensuring that pupils are not required to sit for too long before starting work and that, where appropriate, more able pupils are given the opportunity to commence more challenging work sooner in lessons.
- Ensure pupils are provided with more opportunities to learn about people from other cultures, religions and backgrounds.
- Ensure there is a consistent approach to the setting of homework and that parents and carers are kept informed as to its purpose and that they are given feedback when children have completed tasks.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and their attainment is above average. Teacher assessments and national test results show that, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics is above average. Inspectors' observations confirm this and, importantly, show that more pupils are attaining the higher levels in both subjects. Children's skills and abilities on entry to the school are similar to those expected for their age. Improvements to teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage are ensuring that skills and abilities on entry to Year 1 are now above average. All groups of pupils make good progress and there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, also make good progress. Lesson observations show that pupils develop good writing skills. For example creating 'storyboards' for the story of the 'Iron Man' and writing poetry as part of an advertising campaign to sell holidays. Pupils make good progress in their mathematical understanding. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of basic algebraic functions and using them to solve problems. Pupils' computer skills develop well as they make regular use of laptops for a wide range of purposes. Pupils' good basic skills, use of ICT and good social skills prepare them well for the next stage of learning.

Pupils behave well, both in and out of lessons. Older pupils contribute well to improving behaviour through their role as playground buddies and leaders. They show particular empathy for their classmates with hearing impairment and most pupils have learnt basic sign language to aid in their communication. Pupils indicate they feel that bullying is a rare occurrence and they say they feel safe in school. Parents and carers confirm this, with almost all who responded to the questionnaire saying their children are kept safe in

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

school. There is a good focus on encouraging healthy lifestyles, which has led to the school being awarded the Activemark and Healthy School status. Most pupils try to eat healthily and the pupils are able to combine growing healthy food in their allotment with recycling through composting leftover food. They participate well in the good range of sporting activities on offer. The pupils are actively involved in charitable fundraising activities; they take part in 'signed carol singing' at a local supermarket, raising money for Young Deaf Activities and regularly perform at the local hospital and nursing home. Pupils' awareness of the different cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds of people in their community and further afield is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	1
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?

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and manage pupils effectively so there are minimal disruptions to learning. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan lessons accordingly. For example, in an excellent Year 6 lesson, the teacher assumed the role of 'Bugsy Malone', making learning fun. All groups of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progressed well in using correct punctuation, through the effective use of resources and staff. Teachers make good use of technology. For example, pupils were able to explain how they solved mathematical problems as their working out was displayed on a visualiser. Teachers are increasingly making good use of assessment information to plan lessons that challenge all

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

groups of pupils. However, where teaching is only satisfactory, too long is spent explaining things and telling the pupils what to do, with too little time left to complete tasks. There are missed opportunities to allow more-able pupils to find more things out for themselves.

While there is a good focus on English and mathematics, the creative curriculum ensures that other aspects are given good consideration. For example, music plays a big part in the pupils' lives, with many of them learning to play musical instruments, and the school singers and signing singers perform regularly at a range of venues.

Pupils say how much they really enjoy the wide range of visitors, including authors, theatre groups and musical groups, which add considerable enjoyment to the curriculum. Good ICT provision and good opportunities for art add depth and interest to the curriculum. A good number of pupils attend the wide range of sporting activities that the school provides, enhancing their physical skills well. A well-established travel plan encourages pupils to walk or cycle to school. Parents and carers rightly say their children are well looked after in this nurturing community and pupils are provided with good-quality care at the drop-in club that is provided before school. There are good programmes in place to meet the social and emotional needs of vulnerable pupils. Pupils with hearing impairment benefit from well-deployed learning support assistants who enable them to take a full part in all aspects of the curriculum.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The good improvements since the previous inspection are the result of strong determined leadership by the headteacher, senior staff and governors in the face of a difficult period involving four changes of headteacher. There is determination among all staff to drive improvement and they all aspire to provide the best for their pupils. Pupils' attainment in the core areas of English and mathematics, and their progress, have improved, particularly well in the case of mathematics. Monitoring of teaching and learning is systematic and rigorous, and performance management of staff is fully implemented. The adoption of a creative curriculum has encouraged teachers to become more adventurous in their teaching. The monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress has developed and been used to improve progress in the main curriculum areas. The personalised information is used effectively to tackle discrimination and to ensure all pupils have equal opportunity to make progress; this is reflected in the fact that the gap in progress between boys and girls is closing.

Members of the governing body are regular visitors to the school and know its strengths and weaknesses well. They are supportive but challenge leaders effectively in raising the

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

quality of education. Planning and evaluation for community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified the need to develop pupils' awareness and experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds beyond the local community. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and meet requirements. Child protection procedures ensure vulnerable pupils are looked after well. There are good partnerships with support agencies, ensuring pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, are provided with good support. Overall, there are good links with parents and carers to support their children's learning. However, a small minority of those responding to the questionnaire felt that the school did not provide them with sufficient guidance in helping to support their children's learning, especially when at home. The school acknowledges its approach to homework and feedback is inconsistent.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers are rightly very happy with the start their children make in the Reception Year and feel the children settle quickly. Children make good progress and they leave this class with attainment ahead of that of most children nationally in the areas of learning for this age. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator provides good leadership. Assessment procedures are good. Staff assess the children's progress very effectively and use the information to provide a good range of child-chosen and teacher-directed activities that are closely tailored to individual needs. The record of their progress in the children's profiles gives a clear picture of the good improvement in all areas of learning and provides parents and carers with a clear picture of how well children are progressing.

Children greatly enjoy learning and the well-planned activities ensure they make good progress in all key areas. Children particularly enjoyed the pirate theme during the

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 that aided their learning well, for example by improving their mathematical development as they searched for buried treasure using simple coordinates, improving their social skills working in the 'Shipwreck Caf' and enhancing their physical development as they moved around the climbing apparatus, which had been converted into a 'Spanish Galleon'. A good emphasis on the acquisition of learning letter sounds in the regular phonic sessions ensures they make good progress in their reading and writing. Teaching assistants provide good support for the children, helping them to settle quickly. Those children with hearing impairment are able to take a full part in all activities because of well-directed support. The outside environment is used well, providing children with good opportunities to extend their learning.

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

A higher proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires than is seen nationally. While most who responded to the questionnaire are generally happy with the school and how it provides for their children, a very small minority expressed concerns with the progress made by their children. Inspectors found that progress is improving and that it is good overall. A few parents and carers expressed concerns regarding behaviour. Inspectors found that during the inspection, behaviour overall was good and there are appropriate strategies in place to deal with any poor behaviour. A few parents and carers felt that the school did not help them to support their children's learning. The school rightly acknowledges the need to ensure a more consistent approach to how the school uses homework to aid learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stoke Mandeville Combined 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	55	38	41	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	51	42	46	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	28	62	67	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	30	50	54	14	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	34	57	62	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	29	55	60	10	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	36	57	62	1	1	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)	25	27	52	57	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	30	58	63	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	16	57	62	11	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	26	59	64	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	43	47	51	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	51	41	45	2	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



17 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stoke Mandeville Combined School, Aylesbury, HP22 5XA

Thank you very much for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school and what we have asked the school to do to become even better.

- Your school is a good one. It provides you with a good education.
- You say you really enjoy school and we saw that in your enthusiasm and good behaviour. Your attendance is outstanding.
- You have a good understanding of what you need to do to keep you healthy and fit.
- There is a good curriculum, with an excellent range of clubs, activities, visits and visitors that make your work more interesting.
- The teachers and staff look after you well. They give those of you who find learning difficult, or who have a hearing impairment, considerable help and support.
- Those in charge of the school are working hard to help it improve.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and staff to do the following.

- Make sure that all of the teaching is at least good by making sure that you do not sit for too long before you start your work and that those of you who find work a little easy, get on with more challenging work sooner.
- Provide you with opportunities to find out more about people from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Make sure that the school informs your parents better about how homework is used to help you learn.

You can all help by telling your teachers if you find work a little easy and by trying hard to work things out for yourselves.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.