

Studlands Rise First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117331
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	363866
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Atkins
Headteacher	Janet Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons, many jointly with the headteacher, and saw six teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, assessment data, monitoring and self-evaluation records, and documents indicating how well the school safeguards its pupils. They analysed 70 parental questionnaires and 47 responses from pupils.

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

- What role do leaders at all levels play in driving improvement and is monitoring rigorous enough to secure outstanding teaching?
- To what extent does the school promote not only local, but also national and global, community cohesion?
- Does evidence support the school's suggestion that provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved so that they are now outstanding?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and nearly all speak English as their first language. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has National Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award. The school makes Nursery provision in the mornings only but it offers childcare for some children who stay on into the afternoon. This extended provision is managed by the governing body and was included as part of the inspection.

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

This is a good school that has sustained and built on the many strengths found at the last inspection. Most parents and carers are pleased with the opportunities the school provides. One expressed this by saying, 'Studlands is a lovely school. I would recommend it to parents looking for a school for their children.' Another said, 'I cannot tell you how much our son enjoys school - in the mornings, I am asked many times whether it is time to go to school yet.'

When they join the Early Years Foundation Stage, most children's skills, knowledge and understanding are above those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and their attainment exceeds the national average by the time they move up into Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 4 and their attainment is high in reading, writing and mathematics. The combination of good progress and high standards means that achievement is outstanding, and the school prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education. It also enables them to gain an outstanding grasp of how to live healthily and the opportunity to take part in a wide range of sporting activities.

Teaching is good and there is a focused, purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Staff have high expectations and pupils' outstanding behaviour is a major contributory factor in their learning. Teachers give pupils interesting and varied activities, and make clear what they need to do to succeed. A particular strength of the school is the way pupils consolidate their literacy and information and communication technology skills in a range of subjects. However, teachers do not always match work sufficiently to the prior attainment of different groups in their classes, especially to the needs of less-able pupils. As part of this, they do not deploy their teaching assistants as well as they could during some lesson introductions that are too long. At times, they also invite pupils to work together when they would make faster progress by thinking for themselves, especially when activities involve recording in English and mathematics.

Exceptionally good partnerships with other schools and organisations extend pupils' learning opportunities and broaden their personal horizons. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and each pupil is known and valued as an individual. Pupils say that they enjoy school a great deal and this is evident in their high rate of attendance. The school is a cohesive community and relationships are very positive. The school promotes community cohesion well and has strong links with the local area. Nevertheless, leaders have rightly identified the need to increase opportunities for pupils to find out at first hand about contrasting communities in this country and overseas.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher has high expectations and is strongly committed to making the school as good as possible. Leaders work continuously to bring about improvement and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to

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act quickly where any pupil's learning is slipping. There are well-established systems in place for checking teachers' work but the monitoring of teaching is not always as focused as it could be. Although a good deal of lesson observation takes place, leaders have not concentrated enough on the impact teaching has on the learning of different groups or on the difference between good and outstanding teaching. The school is working on the right priorities for development, however, and has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers in Years 1 to 4 match tasks and approaches to the prior attainment of different groups of pupils, particularly those who are less able
 - keeping lesson introductions suitably concise and making full use of the skills of teaching assistants throughout each lesson
 - using paired working between pupils more judiciously, only where doing so deepens and extends their thinking
 - checking closely how well teaching promotes the learning of different groups of pupils and concentrating monitoring on those features that would shift teaching from good to outstanding.
- Build on the strong local links to provide pupils with more opportunities to learn at first hand about the lives of people in contrasting communities in the United Kingdom and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils make good progress throughout the school so that their attainment is high at the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave at the end of Year 4. There are no differences in the overall achievement of different groups, including the few pupils of minority ethnic heritage. Less-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities sometimes spend too long working with the rest of the class on activities that are not closely matched to the next steps in their learning. However, they benefit greatly from the skilled support that teaching assistants provide and from intensive support programmes matched very well to their needs.

Pupils make good progress not only in reading, writing and mathematics but also in other subjects. Their consistent application and enjoyment of learning, together with very well-developed literacy skills, enable them to succeed quickly with new tasks. This was evident equally in Years 1 and 2 where pupils confidently recorded the detailed findings of their scientific experiments and in Year 4 where they wrote a persuasive letter expressing their concern about the plight of an endangered tribe. Pupils develop a wide range of information and communication technology skills and working with computers supports their learning in other subjects. Their attention to detail is apparent in the many examples of attractive artwork on display that reveal above-average skills and a high level of finish.

Pupils are considerate and supportive of one another. Most say that they feel safe in school and they are confident that issues they raise will be dealt with effectively and promptly. Pupils willingly take on responsibility and participate fully in school life and events in the local community. They are actively involved in fundraising and contribute not

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only to school improvement but have also met with town councillors to express their views about local affairs. Pupils have highly developed social skills and a strong sense of right and wrong. They think about their own experiences and respect the feelings and needs of others. Pupils engage enthusiastically in artistic and cultural activities, including through the many links with local schools and organisations. Involvement in drama, music and community activities, together with the themed weeks as part of the curriculum, contributes greatly to pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
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 organise their classrooms and manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well. They provide pupils with motivating and varied activities, which capture their interest and encourage them to apply themselves conscientiously. Teachers' skilled questioning probes pupils' thinking. Pupils, in turn, are confident to share their ideas and eager to take an active part in their own learning. Whether supporting pupils in class or leading special programmes for small groups, teaching assistants are skilled, some exceptionally so, in adapting tasks and explaining new concepts. Their substantial contribution to the progress of pupils who need additional support helps to counteract the fact that teachers do not always tailor activities sufficiently to the prior attainment of less-able pupils.

At a whole-school level, leaders use assessment information well to match the curriculum to pupils' learning needs. They ensure that pupils have varied experiences and plenty of

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opportunities to develop their basic skills. The school is in the process of evaluating the impact of recent changes to the curriculum to include more opportunities for imaginative development, active learning and enrichment. It broadens pupils' horizons well through educational visits, including a residential trip in Year 4, and working with a range of visitors to the school. The school provides well-targeted support and pays excellent attention to pupils' pastoral care. Expectations for behaviour are exceptionally clear and staff pay careful attention to instilling in pupils a sense of personal responsibility. The school works with a wide range of other agencies to support pupils who need additional help, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. It has thorough systems in place to support children when they join the school and when they move on at the end of Year 4. The breakfast club provides pupils with a caring and positive start to the day, and the school makes good extended provision for nursery-aged children who stay on in the afternoons.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear knowledge of the school's work and receives good support from other staff with key responsibilities, including subject leaders. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress ensures that pupils have equal opportunities to do well. It enables leaders to identify quickly any pupil who is in danger of falling behind and information from the analysis of data is used very well to target support. This has enabled the school to accelerate the progress of some pupils who did less well at the end of Year 2 in 2010 and they are now on course to meet their challenging targets. Senior leaders are concentrating now on improving the quality of teaching in their efforts to move this from a good to an outstanding school. Well-established monitoring systems include checks on teachers' planning, observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and half-termly interviews between the headteacher and class teachers to discuss pupils' progress. Nevertheless, records show that self-evaluation is not as strategic as it could be and monitoring has not focused enough on how well teachers meet the needs of different groups of pupils in the way they organise their lessons.

The governing body is kept well informed about the school's work and its members bring some valuable expertise to their role. Governance is satisfactory, however, because several new governors who joined recently are still in the process of developing their skills. They have undertaken appropriate training and the Chair of the Governing Body has suitable plans in place to strengthen the role governors play in school improvement. The school has good safeguarding procedures. It has very thorough record-keeping systems and pays particular attention to ensuring that staff receive more frequent training in

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safeguarding and child protection than is required. In addition, all the staff have been trained to administer first aid.

The school has a wide range of partnerships with other educational establishments and organisations that promote pupils' personal development and greatly extend their learning opportunities. It has strong links with the local community and provides pupils with good opportunities to learn about other cultures through topics and special events. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's context and are working to extend pupils' first-hand experiences of different ways of life through links with contrasting communities in the United Kingdom and globally. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding and the school gives exceptionally good value for money.

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	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and improving. Children's learning journals show that they are making good progress in all areas of learning and they exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception Year. Teaching is good and staff work well as a team, promoting children's learning and providing high-quality care. Each session includes a good variety of different activities, with a balance between those that are adult-led and others that children choose for themselves. There are some opportunities for children to take part in extended topics, such as that on the Royal Wedding, which they enjoyed a great deal. However, far-reaching projects that involve problem-solving, investigation and creativity are not provided as a continuous backdrop to shorter, skills-based activities. Staff keep good-quality records of children's progress and undertake regular, careful observations of their learning. They provide detailed information for parents and carers, for example, about how to support their children's understanding of sounds, letters and numbers. Leadership of the Early Years

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Foundation Stage is good and the school is working systematically to make provision outstanding. The teacher is very enthusiastic and outward looking, and working exceptionally well with the headteacher to extend her awareness and drive 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

The percentage of parental questionnaires returned was greater than that in most primary schools. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded are pleased with the school and appreciate the fact that their children receive good teaching. They are happy in the knowledge that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. A few feel that the school is not well led and a smaller number express doubts about how the school manages inappropriate behaviour. Inspection findings endorse parents' and carers' positive views. The inspection looked carefully at leadership and judged it to be good, with a strong commitment to school improvement. It found that pupils usually behave exceptionally well and that the school is quick to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Studlands Rise First 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 140 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	77	16	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	80	12	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	54	29	41	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	57	26	37	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	59	27	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	59	26	37	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	70	19	27	2	3	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)	38	54	27	39	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	53	27	39	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	49	30	43	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	46	32	46	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	47	27	39	8	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	73	18	26	1	1	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.



11 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Studlands Rise First School, Royston, SG8 9HB

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and having the opportunity to talk to some of you and to visit many of your lessons.

We found that Studlands Rise First is a good school. Teaching is good and this helps you to make good progress. You reach high standards, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, and work hard in lessons. The staff care for you exceptionally well and make you feel valued. You told us that you enjoy school a great deal and feel safe because there is always an adult to turn to if you have a problem. We found that your behaviour and your attendance are both outstanding and this really helps with your learning. You also have a really good understanding about how to live healthily and you take part in many sporting activities.

Your school is led and managed well and the headteacher, other adults and the governing body want to make the school as good as possible for you. We want to help them with this, so we have asked them to:

- check closely what you learn in lessons to make sure teachers always give you work that is just right for you and do not keep you on the carpet for too long
- get you to work together only when it really helps your learning
- give you more opportunities to find out about the lives of people in contrasting communities in this country and abroad.

You can help the school to improve by always doing your best and continuing to come to school every day. We wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead inspector

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