

Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113799
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	378752
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Anna Sketchley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Girling
Headteacher	Ian Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 10 lessons and observed four teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, including the headteacher, and groups of pupils. Questionnaires from 54 parents and carers were analysed and the inspector spoke with a few parents and carers informally. In addition, the inspector made short observations of sessions on the teaching of phonics (pupils learning letter patterns and the sounds they represent). The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including pupils' work, systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress, plans for improvement and reports written by the local authority. Questionnaires completed by 36 pupils and nine staff were also evaluated.

Information about the school

Sticklands is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils come from the village and its surrounding area. There is a class for the Early Years Foundation Stage and three mixed-age classes, one for Years 1 and 2, one for Years 3 and 4 and one for Years 5 and 6. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has achieved several national awards, the most recent being UNICEF's Rights Respecting School Level 1 award. There is a privately run after-school club on the school site which was not part of this inspection process. The school meets the current government floor standard.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Sticklands is a good school. All groups of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 achieve well. This is because of good teaching, a creative curriculum and rigorous tracking of pupils’ progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make particularly good progress because of outstanding provision.
- The careful use of assessment to plan learning enables the school to meet the needs of all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Attainment in Year 6 is above average, although it is higher in English than in mathematics. Initiatives to improve the effectiveness of teachers’ questioning and their marking in mathematics, and also to ensure pupils have opportunities to develop mathematical skills in other subjects, have yet to have an impact on raising attainment.
- Lessons are interesting, engage pupils and motivate them well. This creates a good climate for learning and, as a result, pupils’ attitudes and behaviour are very good, they enjoy learning and work hard. They are enthusiastic about school and attendance is high.
- Pupils respond particularly well to the Rights Respecting Schools Charter. This underpins all the school’s work in promoting pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and are very well looked after. This is fully supported by questionnaires from parents and carers. Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place.
- The school is well led and managed by a strong leadership team assisted by a knowledgeable governing body.
- Despite disruption to staffing since the last inspection, effective self-evaluation, leading to the identification of the correct priorities and the implementation of rapid action plans, has led to improvements in teaching, attainment and progress. This is ensuring that the school has a good capacity to further improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress in mathematics by July 2013 so that pupils achieve as well as they do in English by:
 - ensuring that during whole-class teaching, effective questioning checks pupils' mathematical understanding and promotes a brisk pace so that learning moves on more quickly
 - ensuring that marking helps pupils to improve their work
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across other subjects.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Skills with which children join the school are variable year-on-year but, because of excellent provision, Reception children make very good progress. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good and attainment in reading is above average at the end of Year 2. Good progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 2 for all groups of pupils and attainment in reading is well above average in Year 6. Inspection evidence supports the views of the vast majority of parents and carers who believe that their children make good progress and achieve well.

The school is particularly successful in closing the gap for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who make good progress against national outcomes. Their needs are identified very early and effective support is successfully implemented and carefully monitored. A parent commented, 'My child was behind, this was picked up in Year 1...he receives additional support and we get work to do at home...his reading has now greatly improved.' Young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are very well supported and, as a result, achieve well. This view is supported by another parent who commented, 'The teacher set high expectations for him academically and he achieved a Level 4, something a few years ago we would not have dreamed would be possible.'

The excellent balance between teacher- and child-chosen activities in the Reception class means that the correct amount of attention is given to learning letters and sounds and completing simple number work. As a result, children develop early reading, writing and number skills quickly. They are keen to show the sounds they know and learn new ones, confidently choosing to write independently. During a number game, they excitedly demonstrated their excellent ability to rapidly count the next three numbers from any given point. Consistency throughout the school in the teaching of phonics ensures that Year 2 pupils use the strategies they have been taught to build unfamiliar words as they seek keenly to improve their reading. More-

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able pupils read fluently and expressively with real enjoyment. By the time pupils reach Year 4, they write a dialogue well, showing that they can use the correct punctuation, and make writing interesting by the use of verbs and adverbs. Pupils in Year 4 apply their knowledge of tables well, enthusiastically responding to the challenge of writing a multiplication sum as a division sum. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills across other subjects, enabling them to make rapid progress in this area of learning. By Year 6, pupils readily discuss the features found in formal and informal writing and can use these to write diaries and accounts. The less-able pupils are adept at using a dictionary and thesaurus to help them improve their work. There are fewer opportunities for practising numeracy skills but, by Year 6, the more-able pupils' rapid recall of tables' facts and good understanding of place value enables them to multiply decimals correctly and efficiently.

Quality of teaching

Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and especially good in literacy. Teachers carefully ensure that pupils' literacy skills are practised within a well-planned curriculum that fully supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An example of this was observed during the inspection when a teacher used exciting work about the Egyptians to expand pupils' cultural understanding and successfully teach them the skill of being able to write formally, using complex sentences. Pupils with special educational needs and those whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable, were well supported by skilled teaching assistants and made similar progress to all other groups of pupils.

In lessons, teachers pair pupils for short, sharp amounts of talking time. This method ensures a rapid pace to learning, contributing well to pupils' social development as they share ideas and learn from one another as well as from the teacher. The use of small whiteboards which pupils hold up to show their recorded answers allows teachers to quickly assess who understands the learning. In the best lessons, questions and tasks meet pupils' learning needs correctly and no time is lost. Good organisation allows both teachers and teaching assistants to work with groups of pupils while other pupils work independently. Occasionally, mainly in mathematics, the pace of learning slows because tasks are insufficiently challenging. Too much time is spent on consolidating learning that is already embedded and not enough new learning takes place. Target cards in pupils' books and marking in literacy tell pupils clearly how they can improve their work, but this is less well developed in mathematics.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Exciting and imaginative teaching strategies, high expectations of behaviour and accurate assessment of what children can do ensure that they make rapid progress. Knowledge of the teaching of early number and literacy skills is excellent. Children are very enthusiastic about new learning because they are encouraged to be curious about the world around them, taking responsibility for planning some of their own learning both indoors and outside.

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The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children are well taught, a view supported by the findings of the inspection.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There have been no exclusions at the school since before the previous inspection and there are very few recorded incidents of misbehaviour or bullying, indicating good behaviour over time. Pupils are extremely polite both to each other and to adults and get on very well together. In lessons, they listen attentively to the teacher and each other, and this very good attitude helps them to make good progress. At play and around the building, they observe the well-displayed playground and indoor codes, and have a very good understanding of what constitutes safe behaviour. Younger pupils can be heard reminding each other not to run in the school building. Older pupils who act as 'Playground Buddies' display good social and organisational skills. They organise games for pupils to play using a wide variety of equipment. Playtimes are very well supervised by adults. Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They discuss all types of bullying sensitively, being clear about the differences. They say incidents of any type of bullying are very rare and, if any bullying does happen, it is always dealt with very quickly by teachers. Pupils' positive view of behaviour is supported by their high rate of attendance. Although the vast majority of parents and carers agreed that behaviour was good, a very small minority showed concern for bullying in the questionnaires that were returned. The inspector scrutinised school records and found a few incidents. The actions taken show that behaviour is well managed. Pupils agree with this.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing and the governing body. Strong leadership and governance have brought about good improvement. The governing body monitors the school's work thoroughly, interrogating data and asking searching questions. Along with the leadership and staff teams, it has an ambitious vision for the school. The governing body is involved in the school's work at both an operational and strategic level.

The tracking of pupils' progress is very robust. Data are used assiduously to plan both priorities for the whole school and learning for pupils at an individual level. Priorities are accurate and supported by clear plans and challenging targets. These have been implemented swiftly in English. As a result of this, and high-quality professional development for teachers and teaching assistants, the quality of teaching has risen. Pupils' progress has improved rapidly, especially in writing and for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and also those whose circumstances potentially make them vulnerable. Parents and carers receive a formal termly progress report regarding their child's progress, demonstrating the school's accountability and raising expectations. This results in very good engagement with parents and carers. All of these features give the school a good capacity for sustaining improvement in the future.

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The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs well and motivates pupils to learn. Links within the local environment, particularly with the nearby Melbury Estate, are especially valuable in this respect. Opportunities throughout the curriculum ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported, for example through art and music and as a Rights Respecting School with strong links to the local church.

Promoting the equality of different groups of pupils is good and the school does not tolerate any kind of discrimination. The governing body and school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously, and regular training and monitoring ensure that a high quality is maintained. In the high proportion of questionnaires received from parents and carers, all agree that pupils are safe in school.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Evershot, Dorchester DT2 0JP.

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently and for spending time talking to me. I really enjoyed meeting you. I found Sticklands to be a good school. These are some of the best things I found.

- You are achieving well, especially in English.
- You receive good teaching, enjoy lessons and have a good attitude to your work.
- You enjoy coming to school and are very polite and well behaved. Your attendance is excellent.
- You have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and feel very safe in school.
- Your school is well led and managed.

All the adults in your school want you to do your very best. Although they know what needs to be done next, I have asked your teachers to help you make better progress in mathematics.

- I would like them to make sure in mathematics lessons that they ask you questions to check that you understand your learning.
- I have asked your teachers to mark mathematics in a similar way to English so that it will help you to improve your work.
- I would like you to have more opportunities to practise your mathematical skills in other subjects.

Please keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Anna Sketchley
Lead inspector

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