

Stratton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	111983
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	378400
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2012
Lead inspector	Alex Baxter

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Nichols
Headteacher	Philip Aldis
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2010
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	12–13 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alex Baxter

Additional inspector

Deborah Wring

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 24 lessons taught by nine teachers and listened to pupils reading. The inspectors also observed break times, breakfast club and attended two assemblies and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The inspectors analysed 69 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by 107 pupils and 10 members of staff.

Information about the school

This school is a little smaller than the average-sized primary school. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below the national average, but exceeds this in some year groups. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school runs its own breakfast club. A privately funded pre-school facility operates adjacent to the school site and shares some of the school's facilities; as it is managed independently, it was not part of this inspection. Its latest inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. An extensive programme of building work continued during the inspection reducing the outdoor playground space available to the pupils.

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

- Stratton is a good, improving school. Pupils achieve well. Well-targeted actions have increased pupils' skills significantly over the past four years. The school is not yet outstanding because steps taken to spread high quality teaching more evenly across the school have not been in place long enough to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- Children achieve exceedingly well in Reception classes, where active, imaginative learning, both inside and outdoors, rapidly lifts their confidence and communication skills. Good progress continues through the school and often accelerates in Years 5 and 6 where teachers build on pupils' increased maturity and skills by setting challenges that necessitate problem solving and research. The Year 6 pupils' average levels of attainment in English and mathematics reflect good achievement. However, an increasing number of pupils through the school, including currently in Year 6, are achieving above average standards, especially in speaking and listening.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teaching is often outstanding in Reception and in Years 5 and 6 classes, especially when pupils' independence is developed to accelerate learning. At times, pupils' ability to evaluate their own and each other's new learning in lessons is not extended because teachers do too much of the evaluation. While pupils make good progress in reading, sometimes their weaker understanding of the links between letters and sounds constrains their ability to spell accurately.
- Pupils behave well and report feeling very safe in school. Their excellent relationships and the good breadth and quality of learning experiences ensure pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Within good leadership and management, the headteacher provides strong leadership, underpinned by effective performance management, to sustain continued improvement. He is well supported by senior staff and members of the governing body in monitoring and improving teaching and learning through effective use of professional development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the next two terms, share and extend the stimulating teaching that already exists in the school so that all the pupils make the best possible progress by:
 - enriching the pupils' spelling skills by more systematically and aurally developing the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the links between letters and sounds and how they combine to form words
 - strengthening the pupils' ability to evaluate the quality of their own and each other's new learning by more frequently encouraging pupils to comment on progress made towards achieving learning objectives in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers and the pupils themselves responded positively in their questionnaires about how well pupils achieve. One parent's typical response, which also mirrored inspection findings, continued, 'My child has progressed well academically in this caring school.'

Most children begin in Reception with knowledge and skills that are below those normally expected. Observations in the very well equipped Early Years Foundation Stage indoor and outdoor learning areas showed that children make outstanding progress because of the high quality care and teaching they receive. Even so, despite strengthened teaching of reading and communication skills in the Reception classes, because of very low starting points, some children still enter Year 1 with emotional needs and below average writing skills. Observation of learning in lessons shows that pupils continue to make good and sometimes even better progress across the school, with most pupils making significant gains in their speaking and listening skills. The school's diligent tracking of pupils' progress indicates that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve well in relation to their challenging end-of-year targets. The strong focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills is clearly extending vocabulary skills and narrowing the gap between previously lower attaining pupils and others.

Increasingly, in response to inspirational teaching, pupils make outstanding progress in Years 5 and 6 and show mature thinking, as in Year 6 when testing the theory of Pythagoras. As a result, while attainment has been broadly average in English and mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' attainment is now increasingly exceeding the national average, especially in Year 6. Reading skills are also broadly average by the end of Years 2 and 6; most recent assessments show that, in response to improving teaching, more pupils across the school than previously are working beyond age-related expectations, again especially in Year 6. However, at

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times, despite continuing improvement, especially in expressive writing and guided reading and comprehension, pupils' incomplete knowledge of the links between letters and sounds restricts their ability to spell accurately.

Quality of teaching

Inspection evidence shows that teaching is good overall. Almost all parents and carers, who responded to the questionnaire or talked with an inspector, expressed the view that their children are taught well and most pupils share this view. Observations of lessons revealed some outstanding teaching and learning, especially in Reception and Years 5 and 6. This was seen, for example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 5 when the teacher pitched the challenge at the correct level to successfully extend the pupils' understanding of equivalent fractions. Similarly, progress was accelerated in Reception and Year 6 by teachers' high quality questioning during children's self-chosen and independent investigations.

Typical strengths of teaching include encouraging relationships with pupils, strong management of pupils' behaviour and adults' diligent modelling of good attitudes to learning and neat handwriting. These were clearly apparent in an English lesson in Year 4, where lively delivery and good pace also enriched pupils' expressive writing. Marking is a developing feature throughout the school with significant strengths now apparent in promoting pupils' writing and with teachers making every effort to build on previous learning and extend pupils' awareness of what to do next to improve.

The teachers' improved assessment of pupils' progress ensures that group activity and additional one-to-one adult support are planned well to meet pupils' individual needs. By these means, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and an increasing number of children in care are taught and assisted well, including by capable teaching assistants. Most classes also promote role play to extend learning; for example, from serving food in 'Rosie's Teashop' in Reception to Year 6 practising their end-of-school play and using it perceptively to explore characterisation. Teaching was less effective on a few occasions during whole-class discussions when teachers over-directed learning and did not give pupils enough opportunity to comment on how well learning objectives had been achieved.

Reading is generally taught well, especially in guided reading sessions which proceed at a good pace and sustain pupils' engagement in reading because of the variety of activities and stimulating books provided. However, inconsistency in emphasising the links between sounds and letters occasionally inhibits other efforts to improve pupils' spelling.

Teachers promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through a broad and well-balanced curriculum. Stimulating, practical learning frequently extends outdoors, for example during Forest School in Year 5. Additionally, links with a school in Ethiopia and a good range of visits, including to Bristol, ensure that the pupils' wider cultural understanding is appropriately developed.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

As at the time of the previous inspection, good behaviour continues to be a feature of the school. Often behaviour is outstanding, especially when pupils are challenged during practical activity. Discussions with pupils and responses in questionnaires from pupils, parents and carers show that pupils' behaviour is typically good over time. School records and discussions with parents and carers also show that, while there may be a few incidents of misbehaviour from time to time, they are invariably dealt with effectively by the staff. The pupils interviewed stated that they feel safe at school and this was confirmed by parents and carers. While pupils are disappointed to have a much smaller playground than usual because of the building work, they are mindful of the extra safety precautions taken by the school to keep them safe. Pupils also showed a good understanding of bullying and its various forms, for example cyber, physical and verbal abuse. As in questionnaires, parents, carers and pupils interviewed also confirmed that bullying is a rare occurrence and that should it occur, it would be dealt with swiftly.

The pupils' excellent relationships and positive attitudes also frequently enhance learning, for example when using laptop computers to research the population of countries sending competitors to the Olympics. However, on a few occasions, a few pupils lose interest and need reminders from teachers to engage more actively in learning.

The pupils' improved and average attendance reflects the diligence of the headteacher and his staff in promoting good attendance and in working closely with a few families to bring persistent absence to a below average figure. The pupils' good punctuality, also aided by the breakfast club, shows the school's close partnership with parents and carers and the pupils' enjoyment of school and eagerness to be with their many friends. As one pupil said, representing the views of many, 'All the children and adults at our school work well as a team and help each other to learn.'

Leadership and management

The headteacher's determined and empowering leadership has enabled leaders and managers at all levels to improve the way they use assessments to monitor the effectiveness of the school, a key issue of the previous inspection. Well-considered self-evaluation, coupled with robust performance management to improve the quality of teaching, has provided an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and ensured that other priorities have also been effectively targeted. This has brought significant improvements in the pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills in recent years. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of current actions to strengthen further the good teaching of reading, especially pupils' understanding of the links between letters and sounds, to improve pupils' spelling. Even so, the enhancements in teaching and pupils' progress already made, along with the continuing and strongly shared drive for the school's continuing development, show the capacity to bring further improvement.

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The governing body plays a significant role in challenging and supporting senior staff and fully meets its statutory responsibilities. These include thorough vetting of all adults working in the school and very strong and specifically drawn up safeguarding procedures to keep pupils safe during the extensive building work taking place at the school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and effective specialist provision is also provided for children in care, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers. Additional, appropriately challenging tuition for more able pupils further reflects the school's commitment to including all pupils equally and its diligence in eliminating discrimination.

The school promotes effective partnerships with parents and carers that enhance pupils' achievements, especially in Reception where a notable feature is parents' and carers' contributions to their children's learning journals. The good range of first-hand curricular learning experiences makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Regular visits, for example, to Bude Canal and other places of interest, choral singing and the developing Forest School and breakfast club activities, show that provision outside of lessons is a particular strength that enriches the curriculum and pupils' learning.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

13 July 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Stratton Primary School, Bude, EX23 9AP

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school when we visited recently. We really enjoyed talking to many of you. Particular thanks to the members of the school council who talked to me and so eagerly answered my questions. Several of you told me that you greatly enjoy school because everyone in your class is a friend. We are sure that you will be pleased to know that we agree with you, and also agree with almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, that Stratton is a good, improving school, where you are kept very safe.

These are some of the other things we liked best about your school.

- You make good progress because you are taught well. Some of you make exceptional progress, especially in the Reception classes and in Years 5 and 6.
- Your skills are improving in all parts of the school and we were very impressed with your speaking and listening skills.
- Your lessons are interesting, and often exciting, because you have lots of opportunities to learn practically, both inside and outdoors.
- You behave well and were very polite. We were especially pleased with your behaviour at break times, despite you having to play in a smaller space because of all the building work.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors have good plans to make your school even better – with your help they are determined to make it outstanding!

To support the school in its efforts to improve further we have asked the teachers to develop in a more step-by-step way your understanding of how letters join together to create different sounds and words and so improve your spellings. We also want the teachers to involve you more in talking about and evaluating how much you have learned, whether you have achieved the learning objectives and what you need to do next to improve.

You can help by always giving of your best and regularly checking and offering ideas about how you can improve your own and each other's work.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter
Lead inspector

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