

Stafford Junior School

Ringwood Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 8UA

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough teaching is good.
- Teachers are not making sure that they always manage pupils' activities effectively.. This means that not enough pupils make the best possible progress in lessons.
- Not enough attention is given to making sure that all pupils are learning at a good rate.
- Teachers miss opportunities to correct errors and misunderstandings as they occur, especially when pupils are working independently.
- Too many pupils do not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are gaps in their learning because of previous inadequate progress.
- Younger pupils are not confident in using letter sounds to help them read. Spelling is not accurate enough.

The school has the following strengths

- In a short time the acting headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has brought stability to the school and halted a decline in performance.
- Good progress has been made in raising the quality of teaching, closing gaps in pupils' learning and raising the morale of the school community.
- Pupils and parents and carers say that they welcome the way in which the acting headteacher has a clear presence around the school and makes himself accessible.
- Pupils routinely behave well and the vast majority enjoy their lessons. Pupils say that since the change in school leadership behaviour has improved.
- The activities and subjects studied by pupils are effective in helping them develop their personal skills. The oldest pupils are mature young people.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors watched 25 lessons. Several were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors had meetings with senior staff including the executive headteacher, parents and carers, pupils and governors and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Thirty six responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were considered. Eighteen staff returned questionnaires expressing their views, including those on the way the school is managed.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's improvement plans, policy documents, pupils' books and other information about pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Daniel Towl, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional inspector

David Webster

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stafford Junior is larger than the average junior school.
- The proportion of pupils who require extra help with their learning is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, which provides additional government funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- In January 2012 the governors, supported by the local authority, entered into a partnership with a local secondary school. The headteacher of that school is now the executive headteacher who oversees the partnership. The partner secondary school provided senior staff, including an acting headteacher, to take over the leadership of the school and to establish stability following the departure of the previous headteacher and deputy headteacher who left at the same time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum amount of progress and standards of attainment expected of pupils between Year 2 and Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly increase the proportion of teaching that is good so that more pupils make consistently good rather than adequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring all tasks and activities in lessons are well managed and time used efficiently to maximise the opportunities to learn
 - taking care to plan work that provides suitable challenges for pupils of all abilities
 - ensuring that all pupils are learning equally well, especially when working in different groups
 - making sure that pupils' errors or misunderstandings are spotted quickly and corrected.
- Improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling by developing a whole-school approach which is consistently applied.
- Improve younger pupils' skills in how to combine letter sounds to support more fluent and confident reading, especially for those of lower ability.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- After several years of below average attainment for Year 6 pupils, standards rose in 2012 to above average. Higher ability pupils did better than previously.
- The proportion of Year 6 pupils making adequate progress in 2011 and 2012 after four years at the school was too low. In recent years teaching has not built effectively on pupils' previous learning from year to year.
- The progress pupils now make is adequate and sometimes good. Slow progress in previous years means that pupils need to catch up quickly to reach the levels they should be at by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils read well by the time they leave the school. Lower ability readers in Year 3 do not have all the skills they need to develop quickly into proficient readers. They are not properly aware of how to use letter sounds to read confidently.
- The quality of pupils' writing has been an area of focus for the school. Writing is improving but it is not always accurate enough. Pupils write effectively in a variety of different styles, for example descriptions in history projects. Although they are successfully developing the use of words to make their writing interesting, the overall quality is reduced by inaccurate spellings and weak presentation.
- Pupils who are entitled to pupil premium funding make less progress than other pupils in the school. The gap is closing, especially in mathematics. Well-targeted additional support to develop skills in mathematics helped more pupils in 2012 to reach their expected level and the higher levels.
- Low-ability pupils and those with special educational needs are now making adequate progress but this was not the case in previous years. Support for pupils who require additional help is under review and an important aspect of the school's improvement plan.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite much improvement since January, the quality of teaching still varies too much. Parents and carers too are aware of this. This means that pupils' progress is not always as good as it could be.
- Teachers do not always manage the time in lessons wisely. Sometimes instructions and introductions take too long and not enough time is given to checking how much work pupils are doing, especially when they are completing tasks on their own.
- Teachers miss opportunities to pick up inaccuracies in work or spot other misunderstandings while pupils are doing their tasks, for example by pointing out spelling errors or weak skills in letter formation.
- All teachers have improved their skills in judging how well pupils are doing but they are not always used well to plan suitable work at the right level for every pupil. In weaker lessons there is not sufficient difference in the tasks or the support available for pupils of different abilities.
- Common features in the best lessons include teachers being clear with pupils about what they are going to learn before the lesson starts, regularly checking how well pupils feel they are doing, carefully balancing how time is spent and bringing the class together at various points in the lesson to make sure that pupils are well focused.
- Despite the variation in the quality of teaching, the training provided for teachers has improved their skills. Training has brought a common approach across the school in the way pupils' progress is checked in lessons and over longer periods of time.
- Teachers often plan interesting work and use good methods to rouse interest, for example using sound and video to help stimulate pupils' imagination before writing about the eruption of Vesuvius at Pompeii. Activities often involve opportunities for pupils to make some choices about

what they will do, for example pupils in Year 3 made choices about the characteristics they would use when learning how to use Venn diagrams in mathematics.

- Teaching is stronger in mathematics especially where groups are set by ability. Teaching is more focused and activities are better suited to pupils of all abilities.
- Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils and this creates a purposeful classroom atmosphere.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and get on well with each other. This means that they work effectively together in groups. They speak respectfully to each other and to adults.
- Behaviour is usually good and managed well by staff. A new way of managing behaviour has been introduced. Pupils say that sanctions are clear and fairly applied. They particularly like the way rewards are given for doing something well.
- Pupils' attendance is good and they are punctual. Attendance has improved because there has been a concerted effort by the acting headteacher and senior staff to take a firm approach in following up absence. Senior leaders and governors keep a close check on attendance. Attendance has improved for all pupils, especially for those who are most at risk of falling behind in their learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet.
- Pupils told inspectors that they did not have concerns about bullying and that it happened rarely. They know about different types of bullying including cyber bullying. They know what to do if they have concerns. A few parents and carers had concerns that bullying was not dealt with effectively. Other parents and carers told inspectors that once they spoke to the headteacher matters were sorted out.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the beginning of 2012 the acting headteacher and senior team have improved the school and halted a decline in performance. They have made big strides forward in a short time. There is a clear understanding among senior and other staff that there is much more to do. The ambition to succeed is strong.
- There have been rapid improvements in a number of important areas, for example attendance, punctuality, behaviour and teaching. There are thorough procedures to check these areas of the school's work.
- A strong start has been made to ensure that pupils of all abilities, including those at risk of falling behind, make better progress. The improved progress is a result of improved teaching and a better understanding of how to measure how well pupils are doing.
- Senior leaders took swift action in January to see what needed doing, decide on what to do first and above all make sure that the Year 6 pupils had the best possible support to fill gaps in their learning and gain the skills that would help them to succeed in secondary school. This was successful. Pupils performed much better than in previous years, though not all made the expected progress from when they started at the school.
- There has been a relentless and successful drive to improve teaching in a short time. From a very high proportion that was inadequate there is much more teaching that is now good. It is improving quickly because it is checked regularly and teachers are aware of what needs to be improved.
- The management of teachers' performance is thorough and the movement to higher levels of pay does not happen unless performance is good enough. A range of ways is used to help teachers improve their skills. There is regular training and the option to support teachers individually on particular aspects of teaching. The school's new partnership with the local

secondary school and other schools has enabled a wide range of expert help to be called upon. The local authority has also arranged for expert subject consultants to work closely with the school.

- There are clear and detailed plans which drive improvement. All managers have a clear part to play in school improvement. This has led to success in raising pupils' performance in mathematics, successfully introducing a reading programme to increase pupils' interest and enjoyment in reading and improving the management of behaviour and rewards for the good things that pupils do.
- The range of subjects and topics that pupils learn about is wide and gains their interests so they enjoy their lessons. Although there is a good emphasis on raising pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics, learning is not yet rapid enough in all lessons.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a number of activities which successfully support their personal development. For example 'peer mediation' to resolve pupils' disputes, 'friendship stops' in the playground and involvement in the school council support a greater understanding of moral and social matters. Other activities enrich pupils' cultural and spiritual awareness.
- Parents and carers told inspectors that they welcome the positive and open approach of the acting headteacher. Both parents and carers and pupils feel that he is very accessible and willing to discuss things.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors have been proactive alongside the local authority in seeking and securing the appointment of good senior staff, including the acting headteacher. This is enabling rapid improvement. They have a clear plan for how they monitor the work of the school. They have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are working very closely with senior leaders to make sure that improvements remain on track.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114469
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	378861

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Frankham
Headteacher	Beruk Berhane
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2010
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