

Stoke St Michael Primary School

Moonhill Road, Stoke St Michael, Radstock, BA3 5LG

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Teaching is consistently at least good and expectations are high. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. There is a strong partnership between teachers and their assistants.
- Children settle into Reception very smoothly and get off to a good start.
- Pupils make good progress and standards are above average when they leave Year 6. Teachers are good at checking how well pupils are doing in English and mathematics and setting targets to help them do even better.
- This is a happy school where pupils feel safe, behave well, are keen to learn and staff morale is high.
- The headteacher and governors, well supported by the staff, make sure that the school is well run. They work together very well to keep a check on the success of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school's caring family atmosphere and the good curriculum successfully foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and ensure that pupils are growing up as considerate young people.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Despite good, and much improved, achievement, pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Some lesson introductions are too long and occasionally a few pupils do not take an active enough part in class discussions.
- Staff and governors, although confident that those supported by extra funding through the pupil premium initiative make good progress, cannot be sure that each entitled pupil benefits fully from the way money is spent.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, featuring the two class teachers and two part-time teachers. Two sessions were joint observations with the headteacher.
- He met with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and various members of staff.
- The inspector spoke to the school's improvement partner on the telephone.
- He looked at pupils' work in books and heard pupils from Years 2 and 6 read.
- The inspector took account of the 13 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and held informal discussions with parents in the playground before school.
- He observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation including data on pupils' progress, evidence of self-evaluation and monitoring records.
- Ten staff questionnaire responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Michael Burghart, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller school than the average-sized primary. The numbers in each year group vary between five and nine pupils. There are two mixed-age classes. Reception children and pupils from Years 1 and 2 form one class, and Years 3 to 6 pupils make up the other.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils are in the first stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for extra support due to funding under the pupil premium initiative is below average. This includes pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs, but the proportions of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus are above average.
- A pre-school playgroup shares the site. It did not feature as part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- From September 2012 the headteacher moved to a 3 day week contract. Her role is covered on the other 2 days by the senior teacher
- Pupils do not attend any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing so that pupils do as well in this aspect as they do in reading and mathematics by:
 - building on the good work already in hand to get pupils to write for a variety of purposes across the curriculum
 - apply the writing targets that pupils are familiar with from literacy lessons in other subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to more frequently outstanding by:
 - ensuring that lesson introductions do not go on too long
 - making sure all pupils are actively involved in learning and do not remain passive during discussions.
- Improve the way the spending of pupil premium funding is monitored by staff and governors to be sure that it is used effectively to improve the achievement of the pupils who are entitled to it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In such a very small school, variations between year groups in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs make a definitive statement about children's skills at the start of Reception difficult. However, the pattern over a period of years generally shows children's communication, personal and social skills are below what is normally expected for this age.
- Children settle in very quickly in Reception as the result of the school's strong partnership with the pre-school group and with parents. They make good progress as well as having fun because of good teaching and support. Children make the most of opportunities to learn through a good mix of play activities and joining in with some of the things Years 1 and 2 pupils do.
- Good progress continues throughout the school, with those in Years 3 to 6 now making the most of the much improved grounding they receive in Key Stage 1. By the time pupils leave, their attainment is above average in English and mathematics and this is a trend which has developed since the last inspection. Predictions for 2013 are at least as good, with the majority of pupils in Year 6 already on track to reach above average levels. Speaking and listening, and problem solving in mathematics, are notable strengths.
- Despite being typically above average at the end of Year 6, pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading or numeracy work. This is due to gaps in their learning when they were lower down the school. Much improved teaching has improved progress in the younger class, but there is still scope for pupils to improve their writing skills further.
- Pupils know their targets and respond very well to the challenge of improving their work. In a lesson about the Fire of London, pupils were not only captivated by the idea of Samuel Pepys burying his cheese, but improved their writing skills because the teacher very skilfully made links with literacy work. However, the use of pupils' writing targets in lessons other than literacy is not yet fully effective.
- Reading is a strength of the school, with pupils achieving well. They have a very healthy love of reading and benefit from good skills of sounding out letters and blends that are particularly well taught.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least as good progress as others in their classes, because work is well tailored to their particular needs and support is good.
- Those pupils who are entitled to support through the pupil premium make the same good progress as everyone else. However, because their achievement has not been specifically evaluated against extra funding, the school cannot be sure that such pupils do as well as they possibly could.

The quality of teaching is good

- The successful trends of accelerating progress and helping pupils to reach above average standards are the marks of typically good teaching. Since the current staff team was established, teaching in Reception and Years 1 and 2 has improved to match the good teaching identified in the last inspection in Years 3 to 6.
- Teachers plan work which is interesting and match what pupils have to do to different ability levels, but with the same high expectations. They accurately check how well pupils are doing in terms of what they know, understand and can do, and use this information to determine what they need to do next. Good marking of pupils' work shows pupils how they can make improvements and pupils clearly do take notice.
- Elements of outstanding teaching were seen in nearly all lessons observed and featured not only class teachers but part-time staff and a higher level teaching assistant. Staff are skilled at making learning fun. Highlights were evident in the way Reception children revelled in searching for treasure outdoors while Years 3 to 6 explored gory Aztec sacrifices; in addition, all Key Stage

2 pupils (and staff as well!) are learning the violin or cello.

- In the very small number of lessons where introductions are too long, pupils' interest tends to drop and progress is limited.
- Staff use questioning techniques well to get pupils to express their opinions and explain their preferences very effectively and this particularly inspires more-able pupils to join in debate. However, there are a few times when some less confident pupils do not volunteer answers or join in, which restricts opportunities for them to benefit fully from discussion.
- From their analysis of school data and pupils' work following the last inspection, staff became acutely aware that the teaching of writing was a weakness. This was systematically addressed and in the last two years pupils have reached above average standards. Raising this profile to equal performance in reading and mathematics is already central to the school's development plan, for example by extending opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes in different subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Comments from parents, staff, pupils and the school's improvement partner all confirm the inspector's judgement that behaviour is typically good. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and act safely and responsibly.
- There is a close link between the way the curriculum successfully encourages pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the way pupils relate to each other. For example, pupils work well together, sharing opinions and being involved in persuasive arguments about likes and dislikes in music, art and poetry. Pupils learn that listening is just as important as talking.
- That behaviour is not judged outstanding is due to a few isolated incidences outside at break which pupils feel are not up to the school's very high expectations, and to some slight over exuberance in a very small minority of lessons with pupils' concentration slipping.
- Parents' view that the small size of the school and the mixed-age classes encourage pupils to get on well with those in other age groups is well founded.
- There are lots of occasions when older pupils take care of younger ones. Opportunities to see the benefits of taking turns and sharing are successfully introduced in the Reception year. This consideration for others is built on throughout the school, with pupils playing a part in setting class and school rules and reflecting in assembly and religious education lessons on how their attitudes and behaviour affect others.
- Pupils were keen to say that bullying of any kind is rare. Their understanding of different types of bullying, for example that which might be racially motivated or might be termed homophobic, grows as pupils move up through the school. Pupils are well aware of who to turn to if they have problems and are confident that these will be dealt with. They are effectively taught to have respect for others and their beliefs.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection there has been substantial improvement to the way the headteacher, staff and governors evaluate strengths and areas for development. This has been well supported by the school's improvement partner and the resulting planning is well constructed. It makes clear how the school will know if it is successful, how much time and effort this will require and who is to be responsible.
- The effectiveness of the school's own evaluation is clear in that aspects identified by the inspection for improvement are already planned for. For example, improving pupils' writing, developing systems for assessing how well pupils are doing in subjects, in addition to English and mathematics, and extending the outdoor learning area for those in Reception are all work in

progress.

- Staff morale is high and this feeds off the success that is being achieved in raising pupils' attainment and progress. There is a shared ambition for making improvements and a confidence that high expectations will be met. Teachers are responding very well to being given greater responsibility, confident that their efforts are recognised. Performance management of staff, based on regular monitoring of planning and what happens in the classroom, is rigorous and fair and leads to agreed targets for improvement. Within the limits of a small school's budget this is linked to salary progression.
 - Responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire show that everyone feels proud to be part of the school team. Discussions with parents and their responses to Parent View show they have strong confidence in the school. Staff and parents confirm the inspector's findings that pupils are treated fairly and that there is no discrimination.
 - Strengths in how pupils are cared for and how support for those with special educational needs is managed have been effectively built upon. Improvements include more training for teaching assistants and joint checking of pupils' progress alongside teachers from other local schools.
 - Comprehensive planning, based on a good understanding of what skills are needed in different subjects, underpins the good curriculum. A conscious effort to improve pupils' multicultural development, which included a visit to a Hindu temple, has brought about improvement. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is now good.
 - The track record of the success of leadership and management over the last three years is a strong indicator that the school is capable of being even more effective. Successes include raised attainment, accelerated progress, gaps in previous learning closed, effective use of information gained from checking pupils' work, more able pupils fully challenged and much more effective monitoring of the quality of teaching.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive of the school. They ensure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are effective. They are fully involved in the performance management of the headteacher. They are careful to evaluate the success of decisions made in terms of improvements to pupils' progress. The governing body takes an active part in the monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning, with regular visits and analysis of data. Governors relate teachers' salary progression to the quality of their work and make sure that additional responsibility is suitably rewarded. They manage the budget effectively to ensure that it balances year on year and have made decisions as to how the extra pupil premium funds are allocated. To this date this funding has been used to continue the high level of teaching assistant hours. As a result, this actually benefits all pupils to make the same progress. However, there is not enough detailed evaluation of the value added to the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals to be sure that they always get their full entitlement.
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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	123662
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	402186
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Gregory
Headteacher	Christine McFarlane
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2010
Telephone number	01749 840470
Fax number	01749 840470
Email address	CMcFarlane@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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