

Stonham Aspal Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Street, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, IP14 6AF

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2013

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.

- Senior leaders, staff and governors have worked together resolutely to achieve ambitious targets to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.
- Skills learned during a wide-ranging training programme have been successfully implemented by all staff.
- Teaching is now mostly good and sometimes outstanding.
- Well-trained teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' progress, especially those who need extra help.
- Pupils behave well, and attend frequently. They feel safe whilst at school.
- Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously. Those making slower progress than their classmates are helped to keep up.
- National test results in Year 6 in English and mathematics were much higher than those found in most schools last year. This represents significant improvement over previous years.
- Results in Year 2, especially in reading and writing, have been sustained at a similarly high level over the past two years.
- Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage mean pupils enter Year 1 well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are taught English and mathematics exceptionally well in Years 2 and 6, but this expertise is not yet sufficiently shared across the school.
- Some teachers do not explain to pupils what they are expected to learn in a way that they can easily understand.
- Sometimes teachers use methods that limit opportunities for pupils, especially boys, to record their own ideas.
- A significant number of parents do not receive sufficient information about their child's progress.

Information about this inspection

- This school is smaller than most primary schools. The roll is reducing as the higher number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 leave.
- The number of pupils joining the school partway through their education is similar to that normally found.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is low in comparison to all schools nationally. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also low in comparison to all schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by additional funding known as pupil premium is below that found in most schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- All pupils are educated on site. The school does not use alternative provision to support any of its pupils.
- A privately run pre-school shares the school's site, but is inspected separately. The report can be found on the Ofsted website.
- At the time of the inspection, the weather conditions were poor. There was heavy snow and exceptionally low freezing temperatures.

Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Inspectors observed eight lessons taught by seven teachers. They made 14 further brief visits to lessons and observed group activities in which pupils were taught the sounds that letters make. The headteacher accompanied inspectors for some of the observations.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. Inspectors ate their lunch with the pupils.
- Pupils spoke about their experiences of school and read to inspectors, who reviewed earlier work recorded in their books.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body, the headteacher and staff with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs, the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The views of the local authority were shared during a telephone call.
- Responses from 37 parents who completed the questionnaire on the Parent View website were taken into account. Inspectors also considered the results of the school's own recent parent survey.
- The inspection team scrutinised a number of documents, including reports from the local authority about the school's effectiveness, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, data on pupils' current progress, notes of the headteacher's checks on the quality of teaching, minutes from governing body meetings, arrangements for safeguarding and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that all staff:
 - make clear to pupils at the beginning of the lesson what they are expected to learn, in a child-friendly way
 - offer pupils opportunities to think through problems for themselves and decide how they want to record their ideas
 - inspire boys to write, and to use their imagination and creative ideas well
 - get even better in helping pupils to learn, benefitting from their exceptionally skilled colleagues in school.
- Implement the plans to provide parents with more information about their child's progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Year 6 test results in English and mathematics in 2012 were high compared to those found in schools nationally. Almost all pupils made good progress and reached the levels expected of them for their age. Over half of the pupils reached the higher level for their age in mathematics.
- Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach similarly high results in 2013. This shows that the action taken by the school to raise the quality of teaching following a decline in attainment in previous years has been particularly successful.
- The important improvements made to the building, resources and overall quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage are enabling these pupils to make better progress than in the past. Since the previous inspection, there has been a year-on-year rise in attainment. In 2012, children joined Year 1 at levels well above those expected for their age.
- For the past two years, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has been sustained at a high level compared to other schools, especially in reading and writing. This high level of attainment is not always built on as well as it might be in Years 3 and 4, but progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils make a good start with their reading. Through good-quality teaching, they soon learn the sounds letters make and use this to help them to read unfamiliar words. Pupils read frequently to an adult in school and at home, extending their confidence and skills rapidly.
- Many pupils write confidently, with a good style of handwriting and understanding of English grammar. Sometimes, the subjects they are asked to write about do not capture their imagination because they are guided too strongly by the teacher. Consequently, some boys are not motivated to write as well as they might be.
- Senior leaders are determined that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed. Frequent assessments of what pupils know and can do help staff to identify quickly those who are not making the progress they should, and to put additional support in place. Those making faster progress are offered additional challenge in their work.
- The progress of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is good. Their attainment is in line and sometimes above that for most pupils of a similar age. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their classmates.
- To meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, staff frequently seek out specialist advice and undergo specific training. As a result, these pupils are included fully in what the school offers and they make good progress.
- In the past, national test results have been affected by pupils joining the school at different stages of their education. This is not currently the case as the school now finds out quickly what these pupils know and can do and sets the work at the right level from the start.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers skilfully adjust the methods they use to help pupils make faster progress. In the very best lessons, they break learning down into 'bite-sized' pieces. They introduce a new concept and then give pupils an activity to practise the new learning. After a short while, the pupils must explain what they have learned. Misunderstandings are corrected immediately, before pupils are introduced to the next new, small step, which builds on what they have just learned.
- Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to focus pupils' attention and to demonstrate new learning clearly, showing for example how to calculate the multiplication of two large numbers. Teachers also use them to remind pupils of what they are expected to learn in the lesson and the criteria they need to meet to be successful. However, these explanations are not always written in a way that pupils can easily understand, hindering pupils' enthusiasm for the task, especially for some boys in writing.
- Pupils enjoy activities that present challenges and, when they work together, share their ideas and find out things for themselves. Sometimes, however, pupils complete worksheets that limit opportunities for them to solve problems, think creatively and record their work in their own way.
- Teachers' frequent checks of what pupils know and can do help them to pitch the work at the right level. Pupils know the targets they are to achieve and what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment. Often teachers ask them questions that make them think hard. In mathematics, these help pupils to understand that there may be more than one way to solve a problem.
- All staff mark pupils' work in a similar way and this is helping pupils to make good progress. Teachers make clear what pupils do well and tell them what they need to do to gain new skills and avoid making similar mistakes. Time is set aside in lessons for pupils to consider and respond to their teachers' comments and ask questions if they need more help.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and make important contributions to pupils' progress throughout lessons. They also lead sessions in information and communication technology and music. Disabled pupils and those in need of additional help are supported well and encouraged to be as independent as possible.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The inclement weather during the inspection meant pupils were indoors for two days. During that time, they remained polite, friendly and well behaved, and they continued to collaborate well together. This good standard of behaviour is in response to high expectations that pupils treat everyone with courtesy and respect.
- A review of the school's behaviour logs, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and parental responses to surveys, shows that pupils' behaviour is typically good. Lunchtimes are happy, social occasions because pupils can sit with their friends, brothers and sisters. Older pupils often help the younger ones and listen patiently to their news of the day.
- Most pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They take care to present their work neatly in their books, especially in mathematics, so that they can calculate accurately. On occasion, activities such as the completion of worksheets do not capture pupils' interests sufficiently well for them to sustain their concentration. The school is working with the parents of a small group of lower

attaining pupils to increase their level of motivation towards learning and raise their achievement.

- Parents say, and pupils confirm that they feel safe and secure in school. Pupils know about different kinds of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They are very well aware of how to stay safe when using the internet and what to do if they become anxious. Pupils are confident that there is no bullying in school but, when some do not behave as well as they might, staff deal with the situation quickly and issues are soon resolved.
- Attendance is above average. Many pupils come to school from outlying villages, transported by their parents or on the school bus. Even during the poor weather, attendance was above average because pupils are keen to be in school.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders, staff and governors have set highly ambitious targets for pupils to achieve. Since 2011, when results were broadly average, the school has responded extremely well to the local authority challenge to raise pupils' attainment. The main focus has rightly been to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that achievement is now good. All staff now relish the challenge to make teaching outstanding.
- Senior leaders and staff have also worked together, undergoing additional training and making thorough checks on the quality of teaching, to ensure that it is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. The school's recent monitoring identified a small amount of teaching that requires improvement, and similar areas for development as found during the inspection.
- The school's procedures for self-evaluation allow the precise areas for improvement to be identified. They are based on detailed analysis of a range of data, the views of staff, governors parents, pupils and reports from the local authority, as well as observations of senior leaders. Consequently, the school has a realistic view of its effectiveness and what needs to be done to improve further.
- A short, well-defined and precise school development plan is driving developments strongly. Staff and governors are very clear about what they need to do to make sure that all pupils do as well as they can. Regular checks on the effectiveness of developments identify where they are making the most difference to pupils' progress and the amendments that need to be made.
- Regular visits to classrooms to check on the quality of teaching have identified strengths on which teachers can build, and the changes needed to help pupils do better. Follow up visits ensure that teachers have made the changes and pupils are benefitting. In addition, the regular scrutiny of pupils' work has brought about the successful implementation of handwriting and marking policies.
- Good performance management procedures and a wide-ranging training programme matched to individual needs have underpinned the rise in the quality of teaching. Data is used very effectively to track the impact of teaching on the performance of all groups of pupils. This is used to hold teachers to account and reward them for their work in raising pupils' achievements.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social developments strongly, especially during residential visits to places of interest. Artwork using a range of media is of high quality in some classes. While some writing activities and the use of worksheets is not inspiring all pupils

to do as well as they might, the curriculum is helping pupils to acquire high levels of essential skills in English and mathematics at the end of each key stage.

- In the Parents' Forum, and a recent survey of parental views, the school found that parents wish to know more about their child's progress. This view was confirmed in the survey carried out during the inspection. The school has an outline plan to provide parents with more information in ways that are practical and effective. This is due to be completed and implemented shortly.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils' safety are secure. Pupils, particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are cared for very well.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors, senior leaders and staff share a very clear view of the long-term development of the school. The governors have undertaken training to strengthen their skills and now hold the school fully to account for its performance in comparison to other schools nationally. Together with the senior leaders, they explore in detail the school's strengths and areas for development, and how they can contribute their expertise or direct funding to bring about further improvements. The governors are fully aware of the school's performance management systems. They ensure that these are used to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and reward staff with pay rises. Their visits to the school help them to have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the changes made. Finances are managed prudently. The governors are thinking ahead, looking closely at the impact of the reducing number of pupils on roll on the money available to the school. Money for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is used well to provide additional adult support in class. Governors know that this is having a positive impact as these pupils are reaching the levels that are expected, or levels that are higher than expected, for their age.

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	124772
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	406269

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	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Howson
Headteacher	Paul Hesketh
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 March 2011
Telephone number	01449 711346
Fax number	not applicable
Email address	admin@stonhamaspal.suffolk.sch.uk

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