

Nether Stowey CofE Primary School

Mill Close, Nether Stowey, Bridgwater, TA5 1NX

Inspection dates January 22 and 24 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.

- Pupils in all year groups achieve well in English and mathematics, both of which are consistently well taught. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils are well equipped for secondary education.
- Teaching is typically good. Staff have consistently high expectations and plan work which meets the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils. They use an effective range of different methods to interest and motivate pupils.
- Pupils are confident and competent readers. This reflects the strong focus the school gives to the development of reading skills from the time pupils join the school.
- Pupils behave well both around the school and in lessons. They display positive attitudes to learning, as reflected in their above average levels of attendance. Parents and pupils affirm that the school is a safe environment.
- The headteacher has galvanised the school since his appointment. He has ensured that progress since the previous inspection has accelerated and has been extensive. Other leaders have also become more proficient in helping to raise standards within their areas of responsibility.
- The governing body makes a strong contribution to moving the school forward and holds leaders to account well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, pupils do not take an active part in lessons quickly enough. On occasions, teachers' limited use of questioning does not stretch pupils enough in their thinking. The contribution of teaching assistants is variable across different classes and is not coordinated sharply enough.
- Pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to develop their writing and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Owing to adverse weather conditions, the school was closed to staff and pupils on Wednesday 23 January. As a result, the second day of the inspection took place on Thursday 24 January. On that day, the school was closed to pupils, but not to staff.
- On the first day of the inspection, each of the five classes in the school was visited.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the headteacher, middle leaders and a representative of the governing body. A telephone conversation took place with an officer from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at planning and self-evaluation documentation, assessment information, an extensive range of pupils' work, and a number of policy documents.
- There were 25 parent responses to Parent View. In addition, the school's analysis of the views of parents and pupils from a survey undertaken in March 2012 was also considered, together with Ofsted questionnaires completed by seven school staff.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Nether Stowey is smaller than most primary schools. With the exception of the Reception year, all pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average, while the proportion supported through school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an entitlement to benefit from the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below the national average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching across the school by:
 - ensuring that at the start of lessons, in particular, teachers do not spend too long giving instructions or recapping on previous learning
 - developing teachers' techniques so that all are able to use questioning purposefully to develop pupils' thinking
 - ensuring that the quality of support provided by teaching assistants is equally high in all classes and is well coordinated by leaders.
- Ensure that there are more planned opportunities for pupils in all year groups to develop their writing and numeracy skills in other subjects as well as in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good because, over time, the majority of pupils in all year groups make rapid progress in English and in mathematics.
- In the 2012 end of Key Stage 2 national tests, every Year 6 pupil achieved the expected level in English as did the vast majority in mathematics. At Key Stage 1, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics in 2012 were above the national average. These outcomes represent a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Children typically start in the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding which range from below to broadly those expected of their age and in line with age-related expectations. By the time they begin Key Stage 1, most have acquired the routines needed to learn and play with others successfully and have developed their early literacy and numeracy skills well.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs progress at a similar rate to their peers in school. The relatively small proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as other pupils in the school. This is reflected in their average point scores which measure how well they have attained in national tests and how much progress they make as they move through the school. This also shows that pupil premium funding is having a positive impact.
- Historically, pupils have made faster progress in English than in mathematics, especially because of the high priority the school gives to reading. However, progress in mathematics is accelerating as a result of better teaching and timely interventions by class teachers and leaders when pupils show early signs of underperforming.
- Pupils develop their writing skills well in English lessons, but less effectively in most other subjects across the school. This is because there are insufficient planned opportunities to write at length and in a variety of styles. In a similar way, pupils are only occasionally required to apply their numeracy skills outside of mathematics lessons and rarely as a specifically planned activity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. The high expectations of all staff enable all groups of pupils to achieve equally well.
- Planning is typically strong across all year groups, taking into account the needs of mixed-age classes. This ensures that there is a good match between the tasks set and pupils' differing needs, aptitudes and abilities.
- Teachers are creative in using a range of different strategies to engage, motivate and stretch pupils. In a very successful Year 5/6 English lesson seen during the inspection, pupils moved seamlessly between working in pairs with different partners to individual work when developing their understanding of the differences between formal and informal letter writing.
- Pupils' good achievement in English is underpinned by the school's effective teaching of reading from the time children join the school. In an effective phonics (the teaching of sound and letters) session seen in the Reception class, children showed great enthusiasm for practising the letters and sounds they knew. The teacher then skilfully introduced the new letter/sound of 'v' by first creating a simple story about a volcano and then by producing from a bag miniature objects starting with that letter, such as a vase and a video. This maintained the children's interest while reinforcing key points of learning.
- Achievement in mathematics has risen since teachers have ensured greater consistency in the use of number lines and a stronger focus on problem-solving.
- Pupils' work is conscientiously marked and, in most cases, there is the right balance of praise for good work achieved and clear pointers about how it can be improved. Some of the best marking

seen during the inspection was in mathematics, where pupils' misconceptions about numerical concepts had been skilfully identified by the teacher and the pupils asked to practise the correct method to reinforce their understanding.

- In the few less effective lessons where progress is slower, teachers spend too long in giving instructions to different groups at the start or recapping excessively on previous learning, rather than getting pupils working actively. Sometimes, the quality of questioning in these opening sessions is also limited, especially when what is required of pupils is to guess what is in the teacher's mind, rather than genuinely to develop their thinking skills.
- Teaching assistants comprise a committed and dedicated support team. However, the impact of what they help pupils to achieve is uneven across classes. While they make a useful contribution, especially when leading groups of pupils organised into ability groups, in teacher-led sessions they tend to be either too passive or, at other times, when working with lower ability pupils individually, try to do too much for them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well around the school, including at lunch and playtimes. They are courteous and considerate to one another and to staff and visitors.
- Through their responses to Parent View and in the survey undertaken by school leaders last year, parents affirm strongly that they feel that behaviour is a strength of the school and is well managed by staff; they are also almost unanimous in their view that pupils are kept safe at school. Although the inspector was unable to speak to pupils at length (due to the school closures), they indicate strongly in a survey completed in 2012 that they feel very safe at school.
- School records indicate that bullying is extremely rare. This reflects the productive efforts of leaders and teachers in fostering good relationships through the personal, social, health education programme, Anti-Bullying Week, and the e-safety programme. This gives sound advice to pupils on topical issues such as cyber bullying and how to deal with it. A number of older pupils are trained as peer mediators to encourage pupils to settle minor disputes and promote cooperation rather than conflict.
- Pupils display consistently positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They enjoy coming to school as shown by consistently above average rates of attendance. Disruption to learning is rare and is generally little more than minor inattentiveness, usually on those few occasions when teaching has not fully engaged pupils. The school has not excluded any pupils for some time and has very few recorded incidents of misdemeanours, indicating that the behaviour seen during the inspection is typically good.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about a step-change in improvement since the previous inspection. He has ensured that all staff are clear about what is expected of them. Morale is high, as reflected in the very positive response from all staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems, the ways in which leaders check how well the school is doing, are now carefully managed to ensure that they are not overly burdensome, but highlight weaknesses in teaching and pupil underachievement quickly so that these can be speedily addressed.
- The headteacher ensures that performance management procedures for checking the performance of teachers are rigorous, evidence based and closely aligned with future training needs. These are carefully tailored to reflect what different staff require to make them better teachers.
- Other leaders, including those responsible for subjects, are clear about their roles and are

beginning to play a greater part in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, thus developing their leadership capacity.

- The way in which different subjects are arranged ensures that the curriculum is strong in most respects. Theme days, such as those on Celebrations and Festivals, have proved popular with pupils and make a distinctive and useful contribution to the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as does the school's Christian ethos. However, a limitation of the curriculum is that there are insufficient planned opportunities to develop writing and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The coordination of the work of teaching assistants is not strategic enough; consequently, their impact across different classes is uneven.
- The local authority has provided useful support to the school in helping to raise standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body plays a key role in helping the school to move forward. Governors visit the school frequently and have a high profile at most school events. The governing body is increasingly knowledgeable both about the quality of teaching and achievement over time, including how well the school is doing compared with others nationally. As a result of recent training, governors have become much clearer about the link between how well staff teach and how well they should be paid; they now ensure that mediocre or weak performance is not rewarded. The governing body has managed the budget efficiently and prudently in recent years when its resources have diminished. In the past, pupil premium funding was used to ensure all pupils did not miss out on specific activities such as trips and tended to promote inclusion rather than achievement specifically. However, the governors have recently made sure that pupil premium funding is now well targeted (providing additional staff support time), is making an impact on pupils' achievement and that they are able to monitor its effectiveness. The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities well, ensuring that all current safeguarding requirements are met. Equality of opportunity is vigorously promoted and discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

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	123789
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	402197

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Jones
Headteacher	Richard Adams
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2010
Telephone number	01278 732508
Fax number	01278 733860
Email address	office@netherstowey.somerset.sch.uk

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