

# Stratford St Mary Primary School

Stratford St Mary, Colchester, CO7 6YG

**Inspection dates** 6–7 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards at the end of the Reception year exceed the expected levels. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and when they leave at the end of Year 6 is well above average.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan work that is matched closely to pupils' needs. Lessons are enjoyable and interesting.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are eager to learn and talk with great enthusiasm about their experiences at school. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and governing body have succeeded in raising standards and improving pupils' progress. They have also maintained the quality of teaching at a time when staffing has been unfortunately disrupted by illness.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics are not as good as in reading or writing.
- Opportunities to build on pupils' strong speaking and listening skills are not always used fully to extend their learning.
- Teachers do not always use pupils' speaking and listening to provide a foundation for their writing and links between the two are not always close enough.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of nine lessons. Six of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books and listened to pupils reading.
- Account was taken of the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress, its self-evaluation and plans for future development. The inspector also looked at a range of documents and policies concerning management of the school, including the minutes of governing body meetings, and keeping pupils safe.
- Consideration was given to the 24 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and eight responses to the staff questionnaire. The results of the school's own recent survey of parents' views were also taken into account.

## Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement for their special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The school does not currently have any pupils who are educated through alternative provision away from the school site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the pupils' attainment and progress.
- Pupils are currently taught in three mixed-age classes. Reception and Year 1 are taught together, as are Years 2 and 3 and Years 4, 5 and 6.
- An independent nursery is accommodated on the school site. This is subject to a separate inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - creating more opportunities for pupils to add, subtract, multiply and divide in their heads
  - making sure that, whenever possible, pupils have the chance to explain and discuss what they have done to arrive at their answer.
- Make full use of pupils' highly developed speaking and listening skills to promote their attainment and progress by:
  - wherever possible creating opportunities for pupils to discuss and prepare their answers to questions
  - consistently posing questions that challenge pupils' thinking and draw on their knowledge
  - strengthening the links between pupils speaking and listening and their writing.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- The relatively small number of pupils in each year means that the standards attained in the national tests sometimes appear to fluctuate significantly from year to year. However, a remarkably consistent pattern of above and sometimes well-above average attainment is now in place.
- Children begin in the Reception year with knowledge and skills that are at least in line with the level expected for their age and are often above. The current Reception group are making good progress. They are on course to join Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are well-above average, especially in their personal, social and emotional and development, their communication language and literacy and their mathematical understanding. The quality of their writing is far beyond that expected for their age.
- The pattern of good progress, illustrated by the work seen in pupils' books, is sustained in all years throughout the school. All pupils, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs and those who are eligible for the pupil premium, make at least good progress with many exceeding this.
- Even in 2012, when standards at the end of Year 6 were below average, pupils made good progress from their relative starting points. Progress for those pupils who are currently entitled to a free school meal is good. The majority of these pupils are as little as a term behind pupils in other groups, while some have already caught up.
- For the last two years standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were above average. The current Year 2 group are on course to attain standards that are above average in reading, well above in writing and exceptionally high in mathematics. By the time they join Year 3 they are likely to be two terms and for some a year beyond the levels expected for their age.
- Standards for the current Year 6 are on course to be well-above average in English. This will place some of the pupils almost a year ahead of where they might reasonably be expected to be. However, standards in mathematics, while above average, lag behind those in for reading and writing. The work in pupils' books in Years 3, 4 and 5 strongly indicates that above average standards are likely to be sustained in future years.
- Pupils of all ages are avid readers and standards in reading are above average throughout the school. The youngest pupils rapidly acquire a good understanding of the sounds made by letters and words.
- Standards exceed expectations in several other subjects and aspects of learning. This is especially so in speaking and listening, information and communication technology and music.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers plan activities that are usually matched precisely to the stage that pupils have reached. However, there are isolated occasions when progress slows because the mixed-age classes are grouped in some subjects by age, rather than by ability.
- Lessons are consistently enjoyable and capture pupils' enthusiasm and interest. Invariably pupils

are inspired to try their very best. Often, including their homework tasks, the work they do shows they are willing to go the extra mile in the quality of what they produce.

- While progress in mathematics is good and standards are above average there are times when there is insufficient focus and time given to promoting pupils' mental arithmetic. There are also occasions when teachers do not ask pupils to explain or discuss how they have arrived at the answer they have given. This applies mainly in years 3 to 6, as pupils in Years 1 and 2 get off to a good start. Rising standards across the school are testament to the way in which teachers promote the basic skills of reading, writing and information and communication technology exceptionally well.
- Teachers often use questions effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their knowledge by making good use of pupils very high speaking and listening abilities. Even so, there are times when not all pupils are involved sufficiently in contributing to thinking through how they might answer questions. Similarly, even though standards in writing are above average, pupils' high-level speaking skills are not always used to lay a foundation for what pupils write.
- Support for any pupil who shows signs of falling behind is highly effective. These pupils and those who are eligible to the pupil premium often benefit from being taught individually or in small groups by very skilful teaching assistants. This is especially true of the way in which younger pupils acquire their knowledge of letter and word sounds and in the successful promotion of the reading of older pupils.
- Assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are frequent and accurate and used to identify the next steps in learning. Pupils are also well informed about the levels they have attained and about what they should do to reach the next level. Homework is also used well to promote pupils' learning, although there are some parents who would like to have more homework for the children.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school is excellent. In this respect, parents, pupils and staff are all very positive.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils are clearly well motivated to attend and to turn up on time. Pupils are also caring, respectful, courteous and supportive towards each other and towards adults.
- Instances of bullying or unacceptable behaviour are rare. When such instances occur they are invariably resolved amicably and often without recourse to adult intervention. Pupils express every confidence in the guidance and support they receive from adults. Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour with great skill and sensitivity by anticipating and resolving potential conflicts before they have a chance to get out of hand. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to stay safe. Similarly, they are very aware of the possible impact of all types of bullying, especially that arising from misuse of the internet. They show knowledge, respect and understanding towards those who come from different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs and to those less fortunate than themselves.
- Pupils are ever willing to take on responsibilities. This is frequently illustrated by their eagerness to help around the classroom. They know exactly what to do to make sure everything happens

like clockwork. For example, they know which books to give at any given time without being told. Pupils are proud to be members of the school council and fulfil their role in the 'Playground Leaders' group.

## **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and governing body have shown significant tenacity in raising standards and maintaining the quality of teaching. This has been achieved against a background of significant disruption to teaching and subject leadership, resulting from the unfortunate illness of key staff. The effective actions that school leaders have taken present a compelling vision for the school's continued improvement in the future.
- There are increasingly beneficial links between the school's largely accurate view of itself, plans for continued improvement and the challenging targets set for pupils' attainment and progress. These targets are also taken into account when leaders are considering pay rises for teachers' performance.
- The further professional development of staff is also linked well to the identified areas for improvement. For example, the school has identified the tendency for standards in mathematics to lag behind those in English and is ambitious to do better. To this end training is being provided for the newly appointed subject leader for mathematics.
- The range of subjects and additional activities provided for pupils, including those for children in the Reception year, contribute well towards their academic progress and personal development. The school makes sure that all pupils have equal opportunities and are included in all activities. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective.
- For example, participation in musical activities is greatly appreciated by pupils and standards are high. Pupils speak highly of their work in partnership with 'East Feast', a charitable organisation that helps schools to improve their grounds. Visiting specialists make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress in music and in sport.
- Communication with parents about their children's progress and personal development are good. Parents have predominantly positive views about the school's work. Parents also make a valuable contribution; for example, by listening to pupils reading, organising events such as the Valentine's disco and in raising significant funds to support the school's work.
- The local authority has provided help in formulating the school's self-evaluation and in identifying aspects of the school's work that might be improved. It has also brokered a helpful link with an outstanding school elsewhere in the county to support the continued development of teaching and subject leadership. The governing body has also been provided with helpful training about the interpretation of school performance data.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is supportive and increasingly knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement compared with all schools nationally. Governors bring a range of valuable skills, including financial management and an understanding of the workings of schools. They visit regularly to check on the quality of the school's work and on the progress of steps for improvement. The governing body fulfils all the duties required of it by law, including arrangements for keeping pupils safe. Some governors are relatively new to the role, but have been supported by an introductory course to make sure they quickly get up to speed. Experienced governors have also set up a 'Challenge' committee to help colleagues to keep abreast of developments and innovations. They are appropriately involved in setting

performance targets for the headteacher and other members of staff. Governors take their duty to make sure resources are used wisely and give value for money very seriously. Spending on all items is checked closely. For example, they are well informed about the positive impact that recently purchased computers are having on pupils' progress. They are also fully aware of how additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent and how it is having a positive impact on the attainment and progress of eligible pupils.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124675
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	402285

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Norman Woodard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jenny Cockett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2009
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