

Standens Barn Primary School

Flaxwell Court, Standens Barn, Northampton, NN3 9EH

Inspection dates 20–21 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Underachievement in the past has not yet been fully overcome and there are too few pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels particularly by the end of Year 2.
- Although teaching is improving, it is not yet consistently good. Opportunities for pupils to work for extended periods, without direct support, are not always promoted well enough.
- Explanations are not always clear and pupils' understanding is not checked well enough. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they should.
- The pace of pupils' learning sometimes slows, for example, when the class is taught together for too long.
- Although leaders observe teaching in classes to identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide other support, improvements have not yet worked as intended and teaching in some lessons is not yet good enough.
- Leaders do not use information about the progress of different groups of pupils in different classes as well as they should. This is partly why governors have not provided a strong enough challenge to leaders over how well the school has been doing.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school and the proportion of pupils making at least expected progress is increasing.
- Improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the time of the previous inspection means that children now get off to a good start.
- Teachers manage classes well and treat pupils as individuals. Relationships are harmonious and pupils enjoy being in school.
- Pupils show respect towards each other and behave well. They feel safe in school and incidents of misbehaviour are rare.
- The individual progress of pupils is regularly evaluated and tracked. Individual support is helping to boost pupils' basic skills well.
- The staff work well together, readily take on responsibility and put new ideas into practice to help pupils to make better progress.
- Good use of drama is improving pupils' speaking and listening skills and helps them to develop their ideas for writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, including four which were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed an assembly.
- Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) and information from the school's survey of parents' opinions. Parents' views were also gathered from informal conversations at the start the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents, including the school improvement planning, school checks on teaching and progress, records relating to attendance, the school's numerical data on pupils' progress, and analysed samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Peter Clifton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Hibbert

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school. There are 11 classes. Pupils are taught in separate year groups in Reception, Years 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 3 are usually taught alongside Year 4. Similarly, Year 5 pupils are usually taught alongside Year 6.
- The school does not make use of any alternative offsite provision (where lessons take place regularly away from school).
- A higher than usual proportion of pupils join the school mid-year.
- About three quarters of the pupils are White British. The remaining pupils come from a broad range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from forces families, is above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school has recently developed a formal working partnership with another local school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that progress is consistently good or better and increase the proportion of pupils working at the higher National Curriculum levels, particularly at the end of Year 2, by:
 - providing more extended opportunities for pupils to work on their own or together in groups, including activities where they can direct their own learning
 - ensuring that explanations are clear and pupils' understanding is carefully checked during lessons, including for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - ensuring that the pace of learning in lessons is brisk, for example, by moving pupils more quickly onto individual tasks.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - driving through the improvements in teaching and learning by using visits to other schools and close checking on the learning of different groups of pupils in lessons
 - improving the quality of information available about the progress of different groups, and making sure that governors and other leaders hold staff more closely to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- By the end of Year 2, overall attainment is below average. The main reason for this is because, for some time, too few pupils have reached the higher national curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are making up some of the lost ground in Key Stage 2, but there remain inconsistencies in progress across the different year groups. Pupils do not always make enough progress in lessons when they work together for too long, rather than on work matched to their needs.
- Children start school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below age-related expectations. The good gains currently being made in the Early Years Foundation Stage reflect improvement since the previous inspection, and as a result, children are now closer to the expected levels of development in the different areas of learning by the time they move up to Year 1.
- The current Reception children enjoy working together and are developing independence well. They choose letters to make sounds when reading and spelling words. One group of children, for example, acted out looking for zebras through binoculars at a safari park before finding out more about them on a computer tablet.
- Basic reading skills are being boosted and this is shown, for example, in the above average percentage of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check (this is a national check on how well pupils understand and use letters and their sounds to help them to read).
- Since the previous inspection, Year 6 attainment has been broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils who attain the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics has risen for the past three years. In the current Year 6, pupils are on course to improve their attainment from that in 2012, particularly in writing.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 used a broad range of skills to great effect when they made an animated film using information and communication technology, storyboards and a 'set' they had constructed themselves.
- Pupils who are in receipt of additional pupil premium funding make progress which is at least as good as and sometimes better than their classmates. This is because of some good additional support. Their attainment by the end of Year 6, based on average point scores (which show their overall National Curriculum results) is very close to that of other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress which is similar to other pupils. In Reception, support sessions to help children develop speaking and listening are promoting good progress. However, there are times in lessons when pupils who have special educational needs are given too much help and this stifles their progress. Case studies of pupils with more significant needs show that they make good progress.
- There are examples of good support being provided for pupils who speak English as an additional language which help them to make good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make progress which is similar to other pupils.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- While teaching is improving, it is not consistently good across the school. It is stronger in Reception and Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.
- There are occasions when pupils, including those who are disabled and who have special educational needs, are given too much help with their learning. This happens, for example, when adults prompt or tell pupils answers to questions and then do not check whether the pupils understand what they are doing.
- Explanations are not always clear enough and when this happens, learning slows. In Year 1, children struggled when using a number square to help them to subtract numbers because they did not understand the method. In contrast to this, Year 6 pupils made excellent progress when they applied methods to help them to interpret bar charts and graphs. Frequent progress checks by the teacher quickly picked up any of those pupils who were unsure about what to do.
- The pace of learning in lessons in Key Stage 2 is typically brisk but there are times in lessons when learning slows, especially at Key Stage 1. In Year 2, for example, more-able pupils spent too long covering 'what makes an odd and even number' as a whole group before being moved on to more demanding work.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and teachers manage their classes well. Pupils are quick to respond to any request by the teacher. Pupils discuss their ideas with each other confidently and know that their contributions will be valued.
- In lessons, drama is used well to support pupils' writing. In Years 5 and 6, pupils used role-play to explore how they might feel before, during and after the battle of Culloden. Their writing showed good use of adventurous vocabulary. There are also examples of good support being provided to help Year 4 pupils develop their writing skills by thinking about different ways to connect sentences together.
- Marking in books typically identifies aspects of pupils' work that are successful. However, steps for improvement are not included as regularly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are well-mannered and friendly. They are calm and considerate of each other in and around the school. They make new children welcome regardless of their background. They play happily together at playtimes and in the breakfast club.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe and secure in school and are free from bullying. The school's logs show a very small number of incidents have occurred over the past year and they are well documented and dealt with thoroughly, by involving all concerned. E-safety and road safety have been strongly promoted. Pupils have a very clear understanding about what constitutes bullying and what they should do if it happens. They are highly confident that staff will deal with any concerns they might have and that they can use the 'bully bag' to alert staff.
- Older pupils work well together and show good independence in their learning. However, a few pupils have become very dependent on direct support because too little is expected of them and this is restricting their learning.
- Parents, carers and staff think that pupils' behaviour and safety are strengths of the school.

Parents and carers spoken to comment that their children are well settled and enjoy being in school, and pupils agree. The questionnaire returns by parents and carers show a high degree of satisfaction with behaviour and safeguarding arrangements.

- Pupils attend regularly. Attendance is improving due to rigorous monitoring and following up of absence.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although leaders and governors have taken action to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement since the previous inspection, this has not yet had the desired effect, particularly in Key Stage 1. Lesson observations by leaders identify strengths and weaknesses, and there is an increasing amount of good teaching. However, weaknesses identified in teaching have not been fully tackled through focused checks on teachers' work. There are plans to work more closely with the partner school to strengthen teaching further.
 - Teamwork is a strong feature in the school and staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders. They comment positively on the changes that have been made to promote improvement. For example, since the previous report, responsibility for managing change has been more widely shared out among staff.
 - The progress of individual pupils is regularly and accurately reviewed. This is ensuring that most pupils are securely on track to make expected progress. The needs of pupils who are new to the school are quickly assessed, including any basic language needs for those pupils who speak English as an additional language. Discrimination is not tolerated. Leaders have rightly identified that more needs to be done to boost the progress of more-able pupils so that all pupils have equal opportunity to do well.
 - Links between different subjects are engaging the interest of pupils and making learning more meaningful. Leaders have introduced good strategies to promote literacy and regular reading of a wide range of books. In Reception, reading alongside parents is promoted well. At lunchtimes, Pupils in Years 5 and 6 read, 'blog' and 'tweet' using information and communication technology with considerable enthusiasm. Good quality displays of pupils' writing reflect improvements being made.
 - The school helps pupils to deepen their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Assemblies are used effectively to help pupils to value being thoughtful and respecting each other.
 - The local authority provides light-touch support because it has confidence in the quality of leadership and management and evaluates the school as improving. However, the support provided since the previous inspection has not yet enabled the school to move from satisfactory to good.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body has become more effective since the previous inspection. Governors keep a close watch on the budget. They have asked some challenging questions about pupils' overall progress and know where teaching has improved the most. Governors know about the use of pupil premium funding, including the individual support that is provided regularly for some pupils. They check how well the school is doing through visits and discussion with staff and reviewing developments against targets set in improvement plans. However, their understanding about how well different groups of pupils are performing in different classes is

underdeveloped. This is mainly because the information they have received is too complex. While there is a clear procedure, which they follow to make decisions about teachers rising up the salary scale, these decisions are largely based on how well teachers meet their individual targets and include lesson observation by school leaders. Governors have been suitably trained to fulfil their statutory duties. They have recently attended courses in order to develop their skills and understanding. This includes finance training, courses on safeguarding and safer recruitment of staff. Procedures to ensure that children are properly safeguarded are rigorous and regularly checked by the governors.

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	121935
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	406062

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Montgomery
Headteacher	Simon Blight
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
Telephone number	01604 413151
Fax number	01604 409786
Email address	head@standens.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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