

Stapleford Primary School

Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertford, SG14 3NB

Inspection dates 12–13 June 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.

- Teaching is usually good with instances of outstanding practice. This enables all groups of pupils to make good progress.
- The teaching of reading is outstanding and good in writing, speaking and mathematics.
- Standards have risen steadily over three years. They are above average in all year groups and significantly above average in Year 6.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and exemplary at play. They are in tune with their own feelings and empathise with others.
- The curriculum excites and engages pupils making their learning enjoyable and memorable. It gives pupils many opportunities to practise and apply their skills to different subjects or problems and in everyday real-life situations.
- The headteacher and other leaders focus determinedly on raising standards in teaching and learning. Together with governors, they have addressed all of the areas for improvement raised in the last inspection successfully. School improvement work is consistently effective and continuous.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The outstanding achievement of Year 6 pupils, the majority of whom make much more than expected progress in many subjects, is not matched in all year groups.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Some teaching is not adjusted quickly to sustain a suitable level of challenge when pupils learn faster than anticipated.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, some of the planned experiences for outdoor play do not offer sufficient challenge and adventure, especially for the most-able children.
- The first check of Year 1 pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels is delayed unnecessarily. Time is lost in finding their entry points so that the school can measure subsequent progress accurately.
- Some pupils miss out on important units of work when they are absent for family holidays. Attendance is only just average.
- Subject leaders have not established the features of outstanding teaching that are unique in each subject and key to pupils achieving excellence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out at a half days' notice. Together, the headteacher and HMI observed 12 lessons taught by five teachers and teaching assistants. In addition, some pupils were heard reading and work in pupils' books was examined.
- HMI scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's checks on its performance and plans for improvement, safeguarding measures and policy documents. She analysed the school's records of pupils' progress and attainment in each year group as well as information about attendance.
- Meetings were held with staff, governors and a representative from the local authority. Pupils talked to HMI about their work and shared their views on school life at a meeting and informally during lessons and at play.
- By the end of the inspection, 30 responses were made to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which were taken into account, as well as those from 15 staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This Christian faith school is much smaller than the average primary school. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes covering two year groups. Children of nursery school age attend in the mornings only.
- Almost all pupils are White British: none speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school receives additional funding known as pupil premium for these pupils, based on the number of pupils in local authority care, from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils receiving additional support for their complex learning needs (school action plus), is below average. Very few have a statement of special educational needs. The percentage receiving extra help to address minor learning difficulties (school action) is above average.
- The school meets the government floor standards which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A breakfast club and after-school club are provided by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that there is more scope for challenge and adventure in the experiences planned for outdoor play in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - determining Year 1 pupils' entry points to National Curriculum levels earlier in the autumn term so that challenging targets for attainment can be set quickly and progress towards them measured accurately
 - increasing the proportions of pupils making more than expected progress in all year groups and across many subjects
 - reducing absence from school for family holidays during term time, ensuring that parents and carers understand the connection between attendance and exceptional achievement.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - using a wider range of techniques to check the progress that pupils are making in lessons and adjusting teaching quickly when learning is faster than anticipated
 - identifying the features of outstanding teaching that are unique in different subjects and enable pupils to make rapid progress and excel.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly where they should be. They make good progress and by the time they move into Year 1, they all reach the early learning goals and some exceed them. By the end of Reception, children reach a good level of development with attainment that is a little above average.
- Excellent teaching of reading ensures that children delight in their discovery of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and learn rapidly. Their early reading skills are advanced.
- Some of the activities available for children to choose from outside do not provide scope to extend children's learning, especially for the most able. Adults do not always intervene quickly and make suggestions to deepen children's thinking, secure their understanding and develop their skills.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Attainment has risen every year for the past three years and it is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- With small numbers (up to 12) pupils in each year group, attainment fluctuates widely from year to year. For example, in 2012, Year 6 pupils made good progress to reach standards in English and mathematics that were way above the national average. These pupils moved to secondary school academically more than a year ahead of other pupils nationally. In the previous year, however, attainment in Year 6 was broadly average.
- While the levels pupils reach may vary, the progress they make from their starting points is consistently good. All pupils make expected progress and the proportion that make more than expected progress compares favourably with national figures. In Year 6 this figure is high.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress. Staff are adept in providing support that enables them to join in and succeed regardless of the complexity of their needs. There are too few pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to report on their achievement without identifying them.
- The brightest pupils make outstanding progress in Year 6 but not in all year groups. When the work is too easy, it is not always adjusted quickly to ensure a high level of challenge and their progress, although good, is not rapid.
- Pupils' written work is reasonably well-presented. They act upon teachers' guidance about how to improve their work. Pupils of all ages read widely and often.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good in most subjects, including English and mathematics, and in some classes it is frequently outstanding. Staff have a clear understanding of what to do to deliver high-quality teaching in English and mathematics but not necessarily across the full range of subjects.
- Planning for different subjects through interesting topics and themes is thorough and brings learning to life through practical and relevant experiences. For example, during a shopping trip staged in the classroom, pupils in Years 1 and 2 eagerly purchased goods with real coins. They

checked their budget then calculated costs and change, increasing their capacity to think rationally and solve problems.

- Teaching provides plentiful opportunities for pupils to cooperate and work with others. This is why their social skills and understanding of others' needs are so well developed.
- Teachers cater for the wide range of ability found in mixed-age classes adeptly. They draw upon the expert skills of teaching assistants to support the learning of individuals or groups while ensuring that everybody gets their fair share of teacher's time.
- Deciding on each pupil's level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics does not happen quickly enough in Year 1 to help the school set challenging targets and to measure progress towards them accurately.
- Pupils' learning is checked at regular intervals and staff take full responsibility for the progress that they make. They use records of progress to pinpoint pupils who could be progressing faster and design special programmes to boost their learning. All groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in literacy and numeracy as a result.
- Records of children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (learning journeys) are extremely well kept. Staff gather evidence of what children know and can do and identify what they need to learn next. Their needs, fascinations and preferred ways of learning are all taken into account and used to plan experiences that capture children's interest.
- Teachers have been working and training hard to broaden and develop their skills in using different techniques, such as questioning, to check how well pupils are learning. Some are expert at it and increase the level of difficulty immediately when they find that pupils have already achieved what was planned for them. However, this is inconsistent across the school.
- Marking pupils' work has improved and it is good. Comments are helpful. A suitable balance of praise and encouragement as well as guidance to help pupils to improve is achieved.
- Relationships in all classes are very strong. Pupils rarely need prompting to apply themselves and consistent use of the 'behaviour diamond' instantly reinforces good learning (names on the green zone) or, if individuals slip into the red zone, signals that they need to adjust their behaviour quickly. All adults are excellent role models for pupils setting high expectations for good manners and politeness.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- All pupils behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are polite and respectful towards all adults known to them as well as visitors and each other. At breakfast club, where they share food that would delight any food lover, their table manners are impeccable.
- Pupils' behaviour at play is exemplary. They take turns on climbing frames and use play equipment sensibly. Supervisors are splendid at promoting pupils' purposeful play through their interactions with them and by joining in with their games.
- In lessons, pupils show that they are willing learners. Sometimes they lose concentration when they are expected to work on their own.

- Pupils are quick to recognise success and show appreciation for each other. For example, a five-year-old spontaneously jumped up and hugged another who read a new word without help. They applaud instinctively and show appreciation for classmates who achieve well.
- Incidence of bullying is extremely rare. Pupils explained that they never feel 'picked on' but they know exactly what to do and who to go to if they are feeling upset.
- No-one is left out from games or groups because pupils get along with each other so well and accept each other's differences. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of ethnic and religious diversity enhanced by their studies of different countries and world religions.
- Older pupils nurture the younger ones and have responsibility for a range of jobs from feeding the guinea pigs to setting up equipment for lessons. From the earliest age pupils are expected to do as much for themselves as possible without help from an adult – and they usually do. By the time they leave they are mature, responsible, thoughtful individuals who are completely 'secondary ready'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the potential dangers that using the internet brings.
- Attendance, although just within the average range, is not as good as it should be. Some pupils miss out on important units of work as a result of term-time holidays.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been pivotal in moving the school from satisfactory at its previous inspection to good in just over a year. She has the right skills and attitude to drive improvement. Staff are united and well-supported.
- All staff enjoy working at Stapleford; they care for the school and are ambitious for its future. They show willingness to go the extra mile in providing a creative, exciting curriculum that meets pupils' needs, equips them with essential skills and provides enjoyment of learning.
- Everyone knows what the headteacher wants to achieve and this is detailed in a useful action plan with tight deadlines for completion that are adhered to. This has contributed to the school's success in addressing all of the key issues raised at the previous inspection.
- Teaching staff share the workload fairly. They lead the jobs they have been asked to do with enthusiasm and flair ensuring that all pupils have the same chance to succeed.
- With good support and guidance from the local authority, the school has improved its systems for checking pupils' progress and attainment. Staff use this information to act promptly and resolutely to address any dips in pupils' performance. Strong partnership work with other local schools is used advantageously to double-check that assessments are accurate.
- Teachers' performance is well managed and organised. Systems for checking how good the teaching is are effective and, coupled with the right training and support, have contributed to improvements in teaching and learning.
- Subject leaders are proficient. However, they acknowledge that there is more work to do to reach a clear understanding of what outstanding teaching looks like in every subject.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors know the school well and fulfil national requirements including those for safeguarding pupils. They are rightly focused on standards, progress and how to make the school better. Visits to the school and the checking of school and external information about pupils' achievement are becoming more focused and useful in providing an independent view of the school's work. As a result, governors are better placed to challenge leaders and hold them to account. Governors are perceptive in their discussions about the value of spending decisions, including the budget for staffing and allocation of the pupil premium, and the impact these have had on pupils' learning and progress. Careful consideration is given to teachers' performance and the recruitment and retention of high-calibre staff ensuring that succession arrangements are secure. Pupils' needs always come first. Even so, maintaining positive relationships with parents and carers is equally high on governing body's agenda. Most parents and carers are strong supporters of the school: all but one who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to another family.

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	117455
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	421750

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Critchley
Headteacher	Rebecca Collins
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2012
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