

Sticklepath Community School

Woodville Estate, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 2HH

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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' achievement has improved significantly during the last fifteen months. The great majority of pupils leave school with at least average, and increasingly above average, levels of attainment.
- All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good or better progress, which is a significant improvement from the previous inspection.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, with some outstanding practice. Teachers and support staff work very well together and teachers help pupils' learning by marking their work thoroughly.
- Parents are extremely positive about their children's experiences of the school.
- Pupils behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. They are very keen to learn, responding enthusiastically to questioning. They feel very safe and well cared for. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and learning activities like the Forest School.
- The headteacher, ably supported by governors and other school leaders, has been outstandingly effective in leading sustained school improvement.
- The leadership checks the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. All staff now share the enthusiasm and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school shows a good capacity to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The amount of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough to ensure the best possible progress. Occasionally, teachers do not give more able pupils challenging enough work in lessons or sufficient opportunities to work away from the teacher's direct control.
- Teachers do not always monitor pupils' progress thoroughly in lessons.
- Progress in writing is slower than in other subjects, partly because not all pupils read enough for pleasure in order to influence writing skills. Handwriting varies in quality.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 22 lessons and also some small group sessions held outside classrooms for pupils with particular learning needs. Ten of the observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, parents and four governors. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a variety of school documentation, including records of the leadership's monitoring, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, samples of pupils' work, tracking of pupils' attainment and progress and records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 52 parents expressed on the Parent View website. They also took account of the results of the school's own surveys and the views expressed in 13 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Fiona Allen	Additional inspector
Linda Rafferty	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for extra funding available through the pupil premium, who in this school are all pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is close to average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action, and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes, alongside Year 1 pupils. Most pupils in the rest of the school are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The current headteacher and deputy were appointed to the school nineteen months ago. During the last year, several new teachers have been appointed and there has been further restructuring of leadership responsibilities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that more of the consistently good teaching becomes outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that more able pupils are always given tasks which enable them to develop skills to their full potential early in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers consistently check pupils' progress and use their improvement targets in lessons
 - giving pupils more opportunities to work independently of the teacher in lessons
 - giving more priority to improving the quality and consistency of pupils' handwriting.
- Encourage pupils to read more for pleasure, in order to build upon the school's strategies for improving writing to the highest level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the school with levels of skill, particularly in communication and literacy, below those typically expected for their age. They leave school with average, and increasingly above average, attainment. This results from considerable improvements both in teaching and the effectiveness of the leadership's checking of pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- Children in Reception and pupils in all age groups throughout the school make good progress. Most pupils, as demonstrated by recent test results and current performance, make progress at a considerably faster pace than is expected nationally.
- The school has eradicated previous underachievement. In particular, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils eligible for pupil premium funding because they qualify for free school meals, have benefited from very well targeted and systematic programmes of support. These pupils now achieve well and sometimes outstandingly so. Those eligible for pupil premium funding attain standards and make progress in both mathematics and English at a faster rate than similar pupils nationally and other pupils in the school.
- Children in Reception make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in developing skills in English and mathematics. This is continued in Year 1, where in the most recent phonics check, which tested pupils' ability to blend and read difficult or unfamiliar words, pupils achieved scores well above national expectations.
- Previous gaps in attainment and progress between different groups have been eliminated. In particular, the underachievement in mathematics which has been a feature of recent years has been eradicated through a programme of extensive professional support for staff and additional resourcing. The school has effectively tackled gaps in performance between boys and girls and between different year groups.
- Inspectors saw many examples of good learning in lessons. For example, children in Reception learning new sounds and letters were excited by discovering new words while making their own pet shop. Older pupils were observed making very good progress in mathematics lessons where calculation exercises were closely linked to real-life practical problems. The teacher's skilful questioning enabled pupils to understand alternative approaches to solving these problems.
- Occasionally, more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should in what are otherwise effective lessons. This happens when these pupils spend too long on quite ordinary tasks which do not stretch their learning, or they are not encouraged early enough in lessons to work away from the teacher's direct control. For example, inspectors saw all pupils in one class working on mathematics concepts with the teacher, even though a group of able pupils had already grasped those concepts. They were not moved on quickly enough to more appropriate work.
- The rapid progress in acquiring literacy and mathematics skills is due partly to the focus on developing them through topic work involving a range of subjects. For example, history projects on the Tudors are used to get pupils to write at length, and mathematics skills are increasingly being applied in subjects such as geography and science.
- Most pupils take pride in their work, as seen particularly in literacy workbooks. However, the quality of handwriting and other writing skills is variable. This is partly because some pupils do not read much for pleasure and therefore have limited experience in translating reading skills into higher level writing.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The school's leadership has been relentless in improving the quality of teaching, through a combination of rigorous and systematic checking of classroom practice and providing extensive and high quality professional support for staff.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because there are still variations in quality, although these are far fewer than when the school was last inspected.

- Typical of the good teaching is the skilful questioning of pupils to further their understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to express themselves at length in lessons, thereby developing their thinking and communication skills as well as their subject knowledge.
- Inspectors saw teachers and teaching assistants providing very effective support for pupils with particular learning needs, both in lessons and small groups elsewhere, for example when 'catching up' on their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Inspectors also observed good teaching of phonics. Children in Reception and pupils higher up the school develop their vocabulary, understanding and communication skills well, because of teachers' high expectations and use of a range of resources and approaches. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' technical vocabulary.
- Teachers mark pupils' work to a high standard. Teachers' comments in books show pupils clearly how to improve their work and they are made to respond to the comments, especially in their literacy work.
- The quality of teaching is reduced and pace of learning slackens only when teachers do not provide tasks hard enough for able pupils. Although these pupils say that they enjoy lessons, they make less progress when tasks are too easy for them.
- Parents are very appreciative of both the quality of teaching and the resulting good progress made by their children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils get on very well with each other in lessons and around the school, for example at break times and lunchtimes. They collaborate very well when learning together, including in Reception where children cooperate in tasks such as solving word problems.
- Attendance is close to average, but school surveys and discussions with pupils show that they nearly all enjoy coming to school, both to learn and to take part in the many clubs and visits.
- Parents confirm that pupils feel very safe in school. Pupils understand the different types of bullying that can occur, but do not believe that any of them are issues in this school. There have been no recent exclusions or racist incidents.
- Pupils understand the behaviour policy well, with its combination of rewards and sanctions, and believe that they are applied consistently.
- Good behaviour and positive attitudes to school also arise from the school's strong programme for personal and social development. The school's nurture group provides excellent support for the few pupils struggling to attend mainstream classes full time.
- Behaviour is not outstanding, partly because the school still has to carefully manage the behaviour of a few potentially challenging pupils. Also, although there is an active school council and pupils enthusiastically raise funds for charity, there are relatively few opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibilities outside the classroom.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has systematically and successfully addressed all the issues identified at the time of the previous inspection as requiring significant improvement. This is reflected in improvement planning and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The headteacher has very successfully instilled a culture of high achievement and aiming for excellence. Several new appointments and high quality support for staff have meant that all staff share the commitment to sustained improvement and welcome the emphasis on accountability.
- A major change since the previous inspection has been the development of the role of middle leaders. Subject leaders and team leaders are held accountable for pupil progress. They now have a crucial role in checking the quality of teaching and learning, as well as helping staff to

develop their professional expertise.

- The local authority has played a key role in improvement. After the previous inspection, it set up a programme to develop staff expertise in subjects like mathematics, providing expert advice and support. This success of this programme means that the local authority is now very confident of the leadership's ability to continue improvement and maintain high standards by relying mainly on the expertise already in the school. Consequently, it now has only a light touch approach to supporting the school.
 - The headteacher's determination to aim for excellence is evident in the management of staff performance. Pay and the giving of additional responsibilities to staff are closely linked to progress and expectations of accountability.
 - The local partnership of schools benefits both staff and pupils. For example, staff work with colleagues elsewhere to ensure a common understanding of expected standards. Links with local secondary schools give access to specialist teaching support in subjects such as physical education and the opportunity to use facilities elsewhere.
 - Good links with parents help to improve learning. For example, parents have opportunities to work with their children in school and get a better understanding of homework.
 - The leadership has developed a curriculum which links subjects together more effectively and develops key skills through various topics which the pupils enjoy. The Forest School has been particularly successful, and has benefited greatly from parental involvement.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very well. This was observed, for example, in an assembly which encouraged pupils to reflect on 'heroism'. The school also works hard to broaden pupils' understanding of different cultures and societies; although, outside the local partnership, it has no links with schools in the United Kingdom or overseas.
 - The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination and is now successful in ensuring equality of opportunity given that all groups in the school have the opportunity to achieve equally well.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has become more effective since the previous inspection, welcoming the opportunity for more professional training. It has become closely involved in promoting and monitoring school improvement. Governors now have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They understand the school's progress data and the qualities of teaching. They are also knowledgeable about how well pupils achieve in relation to expectations nationally. Governors closely monitor the impact of pupil premium funding and are proud of its impact on raising achievement. They are appropriately involved in managing the performance of the school's leadership and other staff. Governors are confident in challenging the leadership to explain its actions as well as supporting the drive for continued improvement. They ensure that their responsibilities in maintaining secure safeguarding procedures are carried out and that they meet expected requirements. Governors have always been active in the school, but now have a more secure grasp of their role in holding the school closely to account and ensuring continued improvement.
-

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	113169
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	408893

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	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Pierce
Headteacher	Samantha Warner
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 March 2012
Telephone number	01271 342455
Fax number	01271 324649
Email address	admin@sticklepath.devon.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

