

Stonegate Church of England Primary School

Station Road, Stonegate, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 7EN

Inspection dates

9–10 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 make good progress throughout the school and achieve well in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The skills and knowledge they have acquired by the time they leave the school prepare them well for secondary education.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, which is consistently good, with examples of outstanding practice.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe in school and have few concerns about bullying.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of out-of-school activities, including many different sports, as well as a variety of special events.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Staff have succeeded in creating a harmonious community in which pupils with different abilities and from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Governors have an extremely good understanding of the school's performance and of the quality of teaching. They provide strong support and rigorous challenge for its leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always include sufficiently engaging activities in lessons to sustain pupils' interest and enable pupils to make rapid progress.
- Pupils are not given enough encouragement to respond to teachers' comments by correcting or extending their work.
- School leaders do not always review frequently enough the progress that that has been made in reaching the school's targets to ensure that their actions have resulted in sufficiently rapid improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, six of them together with the headteacher, observing seven teachers and teaching assistants, and all the classes in the school at least once. He also made shorter visits to a number of other lessons and other activities, looked at pupils' written work, listened to pupils read and attended two assemblies.
- The inspector held discussions with a group of pupils, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and three other members, and members of staff. He held informal discussions with a number of parents, and spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress, and data on attendance. He examined safeguarding procedures and records of the school's own lesson observations, as well as the school's checks on how well it is doing, performance management and planning documents.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspector took account of 40 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View) which were submitted before or during the inspection. He also considered a letter received from a parent, and eight questionnaires completed by members of the teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

Robin Gaff, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Only a very small number of pupils is supported through the pupil premium (additional money provided to schools by the government for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and those known to be eligible for free school meals).
- About one in eight pupils is supported through school action. This is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A major rebuilding programme was completed in 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress, increase the amount of outstanding teaching, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - always include sufficiently engaging and interesting activities in their lessons
 - give pupils enough opportunities to respond to the feedback they are given about their work.
- Make sure that leaders review more regularly the progress that has been made in achieving the school's targets, in order to enable leaders to check that their actions have resulted in sufficiently rapid improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school in the Reception class with levels of skills which vary from year to year and between individuals. They benefit from a good variety of self-chosen and staff-led activities, quickly learn to work and play together and on their own, and develop their skills in, for example, counting, recognising letters, and writing.
- Pupils from different backgrounds and with different abilities, including higher-attaining pupils, make good progress throughout the school from their starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach levels of attainment in English and mathematics, which their performance in national assessments indicates are consistently above national averages.
- Pupils gain a good grasp of mathematical principles and processes, and enjoy solving increasingly complex problems. In writing, pupils learn how to write fluently and accurately on a variety of topics and for different purposes. For example, poems about hummingbirds written by Years 5 and 6 pupils showed their ability to use descriptive and imaginative vocabulary very effectively.
- Pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 2 has been lower than in writing in recent years. However, leaders have identified the causes of this, and have improved the teaching of reading, focusing especially on developing pupils' comprehension skills, throughout the school.
- As a result, pupils' provisional results in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2013 showed an improvement on previous years. Most pupils read confidently and understand the meaning of what they have read. They say they enjoy reading, and talk enthusiastically about the books they have enjoyed most. Lower-attaining pupils have a good grasp of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and are prepared to persevere until they succeed when reading more difficult words.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because teachers and teaching assistants adapt tasks well to match their needs, both in mainstream classes and in small group sessions.
- Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, especially music, physical education as demonstrated by their many successes in local and regional competitions in a variety of sports, and Spanish where they make a very good start to learning the language. This makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, as well as to their preparation for the next stage of their education.
- It is not possible to comment on the progress in 2013 of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium as numbers are so small. In previous years, any gaps in individuals' attainment and progress have been closed by effective use of this funding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects and the age groups that they teach. In their lessons, they include activities which are well suited to the different ages and levels of ability represented in their classes, and give pupils sufficient opportunities to learn for themselves and from each other.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms both of work and behaviour. They make sure that lessons proceed at a good pace and that tasks are sufficiently challenging for all groups of pupils, including those with the highest levels of ability.
- Teachers check carefully that pupils understand tasks before beginning them, as well as during the course of activities, skilfully modifying them if they find that pupils are learning more quickly or more slowly than they had anticipated. They make good use of questioning to reinforce and to develop pupils' understanding, for example by encouraging pupils to extend one another's answers.
- For example, in an outstanding English lesson in Key Stage 1, the teacher ensured that pupils

made excellent progress in learning how to write simple instructions. She made it very clear to the pupils what she was expecting of them, and successfully encouraged them to contribute and to reflect upon their own and each other's ideas. Working closely with the teaching assistant, the teacher enabled all the pupils to formulate clear and precise directions on how to retrieve a particular book from the school library, using appropriate, and often relatively sophisticated, language.

- Teachers give pupils good opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects, including science and technology.
- Pupils say they enjoy lessons, and teachers mostly provide activities which stimulate pupils' interest. Occasionally, however, learning is slower because teachers talk for too long before allowing pupils to work together or on their own, or expect pupils to carry out tasks which are too repetitive.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and accurately, giving pupils helpful comments which enable them to know how well they are doing, as well as what would make their work even better. They do not always give them sufficient opportunities to show they have understood and have learned from teachers' feedback by, for example, correcting errors they have made, or re-writing pieces of work to ensure that they include sufficient detail.
- A very large majority of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that their children are taught well and make good progress at the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- All the parents who completed the online questionnaire agreed that their children are happy at school, and all the pupils spoken to by the inspector confirmed this. Pupils' attendance has been consistently above the national average.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They respond promptly to teachers' requests and instructions, and readily volunteer answers to their questions. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to whole-class and small group discussions. They are, mostly, focused, attentive and work hard throughout lessons. Very occasionally, their behaviour in class requires improvement because a few become distracted or fail to concentrate enough on their work. This is generally because the teachers have not ensured that activities are sufficiently engaging to maintain all the pupils' interest.
- Pupils understand and support the school's rules for behaviour and say that teachers apply them effectively and fairly. The school has succeeded in improving considerably the behaviour of the very small number of pupils whose conduct has been a barrier to their own and others' learning and well-being and, as a result, lessons are rarely disrupted. Most parents agree that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.
- Children in the Reception class quickly learn to share equipment, such as the large toys in the outdoor area, and to use it safely and sensibly. Older pupils are considerate of younger ones and help them to resolve any minor disagreements in the playground. They make good use of opportunities to take responsibility around the school, for example in helping to organise assemblies. Pupils from different backgrounds and traditions work and play cooperatively and harmoniously together.
- Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe in school. Pupils understand about different types of bullying, such as name calling and misuse of computers and mobile phones. However, they report few concerns about bullying, saying that they know what to do if it happens, and that staff deal promptly and successfully with any occurrences, although not all parents share this view. School records show that it has effective systems for dealing with bullying, and that it applies them consistently.

The leadership and management are good

- Under the calm and determined leadership of the headteacher, the school has successfully addressed the relative weaknesses and built upon the strengths identified by its previous

inspection. This demonstrates the school is well placed to improve still further.

- The headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and, working closely with the staff, has put in place measures which have resulted in significant improvement, for example in the teaching of reading. She manages the staff's performance well, by setting them clear and ambitious goals, holding them rigorously to account for their performance, and providing them with the training and support they need to achieve their own and the school's targets.
- As a result, staff are keen to improve their own practice and to grasp opportunities to do so, including discussions with the inspector about their teaching.
- The local authority has closely monitored the school's performance, and has given its leaders good support in helping to improve the quality of teaching. Staff also work closely with teachers in other local schools to develop and share examples of good and outstanding practice.
- The school's plans for future improvement focus strongly on the right priorities for development. They are sufficiently detailed and include provision of adequate resources for intended actions to be carried out effectively. Leaders, including the governing body, recognise, however, that their plans do not, as yet, always ensure that progress towards the achievement of targets is reviewed frequently enough to ensure that any barriers to improvement are identified and promptly overcome.
- The school's curriculum includes a good range of subjects and special events, including trips, visits and topic-based activities, which teachers use well to enhance pupils' learning. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils were able to draw on their experience of a recent visit to the Golden Hinde in developing their report-writing skills, as well as their understanding of life in Tudor England. Pupils benefit from a wide variety of after-school activities, which give them the opportunity, for example, to take part successfully in a very good range of sports from girls' football to skiing and the traditional Sussex sport of stoolball. The school ensures that no pupil is prevented from participating in such events for financial reasons. This demonstrates its commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and to ensuring that there is no discrimination.
- The school has already begun to use the new primary school sport funding to provide, for example, additional training for staff, with the goal of increasing girls' participation in out-of-school sport, and their understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Expert tuition in music, regular opportunities to take part in musical and dramatic performances, as well as strong links with the neighbouring church and the school's partnership with a school in Uganda, contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The major rebuilding programme, completed since the previous inspection, has extended and improved the use of available space. This includes the creation of The Hub, located in the school's reception area, which has enhanced the school's ability to organise successful special events both for pupils and for parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors' high levels of expertise, which the governors regularly update by undertaking relevant training, ensure that governors are able to provide the headteacher with effective support and strong challenge. Governors have a detailed knowledge and a secure understanding of the school's performance and how Stonegate compares with other schools nationally. Their awareness of the quality of teaching, and of what is being done to improve it, is enhanced by their regular meetings with staff and observations of lessons. Governors understand and support the ways in which the headteacher manages the staff's performance. They check carefully that the school's finances are being used for pupils' benefit. Governors know how the additional pupil premium funding is being used successfully to pay for extra teaching and support and to narrow any gaps in pupils' attainment. They are also aware of how sport premium funding is being used to increase girls' participation in sporting activities. Governors make sure that any pay increases are linked to teachers' performance, and that the school meets all requirements with regard to safeguarding 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

Unique reference number	114523
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	428848

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	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Millington
Headteacher	Barbara Godden-Wood
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 March 2009
Telephone number	01580 200415
Fax number	01580 201135
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