

# Stonehill School

Western Close, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4SZ

**Inspection dates** 24–25 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Provision in Reception is not consistently strong enough to help all children to make rapid progress.
- Not all pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make rapid progress and achieve as well as they should because teaching varies from class to class and lessons do not always move at a brisk pace.
- Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2 are below those in reading and writing. In Key Stage 2, standards fell in 2013 and, over time, have fluctuated from year-to-year; in writing, they are not always high enough.
- Some teachers' subject knowledge is not always secure, particularly in mathematics.
- Most teachers do not routinely remind pupils of their literacy and numeracy targets or make certain they know what is expected of them by the end of the lesson.
- Senior leaders and the English co-ordinator have only recently assumed their responsibilities and have yet to make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.

### The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is taking appropriate steps to bring about rapid improvement.
- Children make good progress in the Nursery.
- Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 are rising steadily. In Key Stage 2, pupils' reading and mathematical skills are developing well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have a good understanding of personal safety. Attendance is above average.
- There is some good teaching on which the school can build.
- The governing body checks on the work of the school and is working closely with the acting headteacher to improve outcomes for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly. They heard some pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, a recent school survey of parents' views and 20 questionnaires returned by members of staff.

## Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joy Barter

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. None are currently at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is marginally above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority, and other eligible groups.
- In 2012, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The Nursery and the Reception class children learn together in a single Early Years Foundation Stage unit.
- The acting headteacher, appointed following the resignation of the substantive headteacher in July 2013, the two temporary assistant headteachers and the literacy co-ordinator assumed their responsibilities at the start of the autumn term 2013. All are long standing members of staff. During the academic year 2012-13 there was a lack of continuity in the leadership of the school, with the headteacher taking several periods of absence.
- The school runs a breakfast club during term time.
- The on-site privately run pre-school facility was not visited as it was not part of this inspection.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by:
  - ensuring that all lessons proceed at a quick pace and teachers use questioning effectively to consolidate pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking
  - making certain that all teachers have secure subject knowledge and are confident in teaching mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils, particularly the more able, make faster progress and reach higher standards in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 and writing in Key Stage 2 by:
  - building on the secure start children get in the Nursery and ensuring they make equally good progress in the Reception class
  - making certain that pupils are regularly reminded of their literacy and numeracy targets and what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson
  - giving pupils more opportunities to find things out for themselves, especially in mathematics
  - varying the tasks pupils are given in writing, especially as they get older, and encouraging them to write in a range of different styles.
- Develop the skills of senior leaders and subject coordinators so that they can lead their areas of responsibility effectively and help their colleagues teach consistently well.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not all pupils make rapid progress throughout the whole of the Early Years Foundation Stage, in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in writing in Key Stage 2.
- Most children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge marginally below those usually seen at this age and make good progress. Their progress slows slightly in the Reception class. This is partly because of the limitations of the classroom and partly because not all the teaching opportunities are maximised. Nevertheless, the children are settled and happy. Good use is made of the outdoor area to stimulate their learning. By the end of the year most acquire the expected skills, knowledge and understanding of a typical five-year-old child.
- Records show that standards and pupils' progress is variable from year to year and class to class. Although Key Stage 1 results saw a marked improvement in all three assessed elements last year, over time, outcomes at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average. Standards in mathematics are below those in reading and writing.
- Younger pupils do not perform as well in mathematics as they do in other subjects because some teachers do not have sufficiently secure mathematical subject knowledge and the confidence to encourage pupils to investigate mathematical situations for themselves. The contrast with Key Stage 2, where pupils are now more likely to be making consistently good progress and undertake investigations confidently in mathematics, is marked.
- Results at the end of Year 6 are also too uneven. In 2010 and 2011 they were below average in English and mathematics. Although standards improved significantly in 2012, they fell again last year and in writing, they are still only broadly average. Boys tend to reach slightly lower standards than the girls. This is because the activities do not always capture their interest. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length and to write for different purposes or explore writing in different styles. However, current Year 6 pupils are making slightly better progress and are on track to reach marginally higher standards.
- The progress made and the standards reached by pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are inconsistent. The 2012 Year 6 data shows that they made better progress than their classmates during Key Stage 2 and the standards reached were about six months ahead of their peers in English and mathematics. School data for the 2013 shows the reverse. Their peers made better progress and the standards reached by pupils entitled to the pupil premium were about a year behind in reading and writing and about six months in mathematics. The school attributes this to a number of factors and is monitoring the performance of those currently eligible for this funding closely to ensure the impact of the different initiatives, such as additional staffing to support literacy and mathematics, are effective.
- Despite the inconsistencies listed above, in a number of areas, specific aspects of pupils' achievement are showing clear signs of improvement. In both Key Stages, pupils' reading skills are developing well. Younger pupils have a secure understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and use this knowledge well when tackling unfamiliar words. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 assessments in 2012 was above the national average. A similar proportion reached this standard in 2013. Older pupils read with confidence and with expression. They have a good knowledge of different authors and can explain why they like a particular style of writing.

- In Key stage 1, pupils' writing skills are also improving. They are making better use of strategies to improve their spelling and basic punctuation. Many are improving their writing by routinely including conjunctions and adjectives.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are beginning to make more rapid progress. This is because of the school's recent focus on checking their progress and providing effective additional support is paying off.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting activities and have a good understanding of how sport contributes to a healthy life-style. The primary school sports funding has been allocated appropriately, including part-funding swimming lessons and providing better opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 to learn taekwondo and to benefit from specialist football coaching.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in every class across the school. This is reflected in their achievement.
- Teachers routinely set pupils different tasks and provide guidance on how the work should be undertaken. However, they do not always make reference to the pupils' literacy and numeracy targets or make it clear what they expect pupils, working at different levels, to achieve by the end of the lesson. As a result, some pupils, particularly the more-able, are not challenged sufficiently.
- In some lessons, the pace is too slow and best use is not made of opportunities to enhance their learning. Initial questions are not always followed up to probe pupils' thinking and to consolidate their understanding.
- There is good teaching on which the school can build. Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations and are clear what they expect pupils of different abilities to achieve. Teachers check during the lesson how well pupils are doing and, if necessary, quickly adapt their planning to suit the pupils' needs. Questioning is used well to ensure the pupils are clear about what they are expected to do and to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Lessons proceed at a rapid pace and the well-trained learning support assistants are deployed effectively to work with individuals and groups. This helps build pupils' confidence and ensure they persevere when in difficulty. However, these qualities are not consistently present in all teaching.
- Teachers have responded positively to the suggestions to improve outcomes for pupils. They have attended courses and regularly talk with the acting headteacher about their teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. There are many examples of good marking of pupils' work. Praise is used effectively and pupils are usually offered guidance to improve their work. This helps take the pupils' learning forward at a good pace.
- Relationships are good. Teachers and pupils treat each other with respect. This contributes much to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers use a good range of strategies to manage and promote pupils' good behaviour. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants and try to ensure that all pupils, including those whose circumstance potentially make them vulnerable, pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils are proud of their school and behave well. Their attendance has improved steadily and is now above average for primary schools. They are demonstrating a more positive attitude to learning and are enjoying school. This is helping them to make better progress.
- Pupils say that all they all get on well together. Bullying incidents, such as name-calling, fighting, racial, religious or cyber-bullying are very rare. They are confident that if an incident occurred, it would be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Pupils treat each other and their teachers with respect. Lessons are rarely interrupted by incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Most generally respond quickly to instructions. Pupils are polite and are well mannered as they move around the school and at break times.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a good understanding of potential dangers, for example when using computers to access the internet, around the school or when approached by strangers.

**The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The measures taken by the governing body and the acting headteacher to improve leadership and staff development are beginning to bring improvements to teaching but these are not yet sufficiently embedded across the school.
- Senior leaders and the English co-ordinator have only recently assumed their responsibilities and have yet to make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- The acting headteacher is working closely with the governing body. There is a shared and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development which feed into the detailed school development plan. New approaches to ensuring assessment information is accurate and properly analysed have been introduced and these, together with the school's more rigorous and informed planning indicate that it has the capacity to improve.
- Lessons are observed on a regular cycle and teachers are provided with clear feedback which identifies strengths and areas for development. Where appropriate, additional support has been provided. Teachers are being held to account if pupils do not make at least the expected progress.
- In all classes, there is a focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and, where possible, brought together through a theme. The well thought out two-year topic cycle enables classes in Key Stage 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2 to work together in pairs so that there are opportunities for pupils and staff to share and improve their subject knowledge.
- The wide range of activities promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example by undertaking various responsibilities such as being members of the school council and taking part in educational visits. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their visits to different places of worship.
- Very few parents and carers entered their opinions of the school on Parent View. The vast majority of those that did, responded positively.

- The local authority has provided reasonable support. Officers have helped the governing body to secure the leadership of the school, arranged peer support for acting headteacher and supported the acting headteacher in checking on the quality of teaching and in analysing data.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has managed the school following the resignation of the previous headteacher well. Governors have not rushed into making an appointment and recognised this as a good opportunity for staff development. Governors are working closely with the senior leadership team to secure improvements. The school development plan is discussed at each meeting. They ask searching questions but are supportive at the same time. The governing body monitors the school's budget appropriately and makes sure that the pupil premium funding is spent as it was intended. There are suitable processes in place to monitor the expenditure of the primary school sports funding. Governors are aware of the importance of on-going training and most attend regular training sessions. Governors are aware of each other's skills and talents and use this information when allocating responsibilities. Governors have a secure understanding of how targets are set for teachers to improve, and the process for rewarding good teaching. The governing body ensures that pupils are kept safe and that the school meets the latest requirements for safeguarding.

## 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>	117345
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425256

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Millar
<b>Headteacher</b>	Laura Lopez
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 620262
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 630508
<b>Email address</b>	admin@stonehill.herts.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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

