

# Staplehurst School

Gybbon Rise, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0LZ

**Inspection dates** 5–6 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- The progress made by pupils in writing and mathematics is inadequate.
- For the last two years standards in mathematics have been below the national average. Teachers have not taught the basic skills systematically so that sometimes pupils move onto new learning before they have confidence in the current topic.
- Standards in writing are too low. Older pupils have not been taught how to use their knowledge of the sounds that they use in reading to make them better at spelling.
- The quality of teaching has not improved fast enough since the previous inspection. Teachers' marking is too variable and this means that some pupils do not know what they need to do next to improve.
- The curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their mathematics, reading, writing or information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- Middle leaders do not have the management skills to make sure that pupils make faster progress in all subjects and to develop their areas of the curriculum.
- Governors do not hold the school rigorously to account.

### The school has the following strengths:

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are keen to learn in lessons and they try hard, play safely and enjoy school.
- School leaders have made improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They know they must improve teaching further and they are using a range of support to help them to do this.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 14 lessons and groups of pupils working with teaching assistants, and looked carefully at pupils’ books. They heard pupils read from Years 1 and 6.
- Inspectors talked to pupils informally at playtime and during lessons.
- They held meetings with the staff, governors, a representative from the local authority and pupils from Years 2 and 6.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding information, documents relating to governors, information about pupils’ achievement and progress, the school’s checks on how well it is doing and school improvement planning.
- The views of the 104 parents and carers who had completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as through other contact with parents and carers were taken into consideration. Inspectors also took account of information about parents’ and carers’ views provided by the school as well as conversations with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

## Inspection team

Christine Fogg, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Veronica Young	Additional Inspector
Stephen Mellors	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- Staplehurst School is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is lower than average. The proportion which is supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- 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 the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
  - ensuring that marking and helpful comments about pupils' work are used consistently across the school to help pupils to improve, especially in mathematics and writing
  - developing teachers' subject knowledge so that they have the skills to plan the teaching of mathematics and writing in a structured way that reinforces learning at the right pace for every pupil
  - improving the teaching of phonics (linking of letters and the sounds they make) so that pupils learn to read well and can apply their skills to developing spelling and interesting writing
  - closing the gaps in achievement for pupils supported through the pupil premium and for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - checking frequently and rigorously that all pupils are making at least good progress in all subjects and responding quickly when information shows that this is not happening
  - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they can manage improvements to their curriculum areas and ensure all teachers have access to resources to help them to improve their teaching of that subject
  - ensuring that governors have the expertise to hold the school rigorously to account.
- Improve the curriculum so that pupils have more opportunities to practise and develop their skills by:
  - checking that there is a good range of well-planned and relevant opportunities for reading, writing and mathematics to be used in topics and physical education (PE) and sport
  - improving the range of resources to teach ICT and making sure that there are activities planned for all year groups so that pupils can develop their ICT skills well in addition to using ICT to support their learning in other subjects.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate because pupils do not make enough progress in writing and mathematics and standards in these subjects are too low by the time pupils leave the school.
- Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and hearing pupils read show that there is improvement but there are still gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- With support from an adviser, teaching has improved the percentage of reception children that meet the expected standard for knowledge of letter sounds (phonics) to be better than the national percentage. The few children eligible for free school meals do not do so well.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make inadequate progress in writing and mathematics. Too few pupils score well when tested for grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Standards in mathematics have been variable over the years and have declined overall. The gender gap has not yet closed, with boys performing better than girls. The progress seen in lessons and the information about the progress pupils are currently making is much more positive but remains inconsistent across the whole school.
- The higher ability pupils do not always do as well as they should in mathematics and English. Too few attain the higher levels in end-of-key-stage assessments.
- At Key Stage 1 pupils supported by the pupil premium do as well as their peers in reading and mathematics but not in writing. At Key Stage 2, although pupils supported by the pupil premium have made better progress than their peers in school they still have not made good progress. At the end of Year 6 they were behind other pupils in the school by one term in reading, four terms in writing and five terms in mathematics last year. Gaps are closing for some of these pupils but they are still too wide.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is inadequate because their support has not been managed well enough until very recently
- Pupils enjoy using equipment to help them solve problems in mathematics. They can change fractions into decimals quickly using their good understanding of fractions. They do not have enough opportunities to apply their skills in real-life or problem-solving situations. Consequently these skills are underdeveloped.
- Reading is the strongest subject throughout the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils reach levels comparable with all pupils nationally. Pupils love to read and enjoy their books. They are confident to have a go at new words and their use of phonics helps them with this. Pupils' spoken vocabulary is often rich; for example, in a lesson pupils discussed eating chocolate using words such as 'delectable' and 'scrumptious'. However, because teaching has not been good enough in the past, some pupils cannot apply their knowledge of phonics to spell what they have talked about and so their writing is hard to understand.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but remains too variable across the school and requires improvement.
- Teachers are not yet using information about their pupils to plan lessons consistently well enough. In some lessons, the teacher expects all pupils to do the same task and some pupils find the work too easy and others too hard. Teachers do not share good practice and learn from one another how to match activities to pupils' needs so that all pupils learn well. Not all teachers have developed the skills to teach mathematics and writing in a structured way.
- Historically, teaching over time has not been good enough to establish good basic skills and this means that older pupils have a lot to catch up on. Pupils are not yet skilled enough to develop high-quality writing because they need more help with spelling and grammar. Teaching is now much improved and is beginning to make up for previous underachievement in English, but not enough is being done to build on the effective phonics teaching received in Key Stage 1.

- The teaching of mathematics is improving but is still not consistently good. Work in books shows that some pupils are asked to move onto new topics before they are ready. In other cases pupils are given activities that do not reinforce a previous lesson so learning does not join up and pupils miss important links. Despite this, many girls say that they enjoy their mathematics lessons because teachers have worked hard to develop their confidence.
- Opportunities are missed to practise mathematical skills in topic work. A scrutiny of books and some lesson observations revealed chances missed to practise mathematics in real-life contexts. Not all teachers plan for ways to ensure that pupils use their mathematics skills to develop understanding of the topic as well as improve their mathematical skills.
- Teaching remains variable in support of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teachers do not ensure that information about pupils' needs and achievement is used so that teaching assistants understand how they are expected to support pupils in every lesson.
- Teaching is improving, for example in marking. More teachers mark books well and give pupils useful comments to help them improve. Pupils look at these comments and then correct or develop their work and sometimes they respond with comments of their own. On these occasions, pupils learn well. Not all books show this good practice and the impact of marking is not consistent.
- In some lessons a range of tasks is planned for pupils and these challenge and interest them. The school's monitoring shows an increasing proportion of good teaching.
- Pupils enjoy learning in pairs and groups. They are confident and enjoy a challenge and sometimes good questioning by teachers provides this. One class cheerfully refused a help sheet when starting a new mathematics topic, which showed their desire to learn and a real enjoyment of mathematics.

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

- Pupils like school and they are confident in lessons. They show enjoyment when they are given challenging work and have the confidence to try new tasks without help sheets. On rare occasions, pupils became distracted when their work is too easy but this does not affect the learning of other pupils.
- Pupils have positive attitudes. They want to learn. Teachers miss opportunities to build on their enthusiasm and do not engage pupils actively in classes enough. When given the opportunity pupils respond well to work cooperatively or to think things out for themselves.
- Pupils conscientiously follow up on guidance given by teachers in their marking.
- Pupils like to share comments about their work with their teachers and understand that this will help them to learn quickly and improve where they have made mistakes.
- Pupils respond quickly to teachers when they are asked to do something. They organise themselves well and younger pupils were observed changing from one lesson to another without any fuss or time-wasting.
- Pupils are polite, caring and considerate. They play safely in the playground and know how to keep themselves and others safe. Older pupils talk confidently about internet safety.
- Attendance is average and improving. The school and the family liaison officer work well with parents and carers so that they know that good attendance is important.
- Most parents and carers agree that behaviour in the school is good and that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school but know who they would go to if they had a problem.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school's performance has

declined since the previous inspection. However, leaders have addressed some of the necessary changes from the previous report and the quality of teaching and pupils' progress is improving. In this way leaders are demonstrating the necessary capacity to improve the school still further.

- This process of improvement has been uncomfortable for some but the governors have been supportive of the actions that school leaders have taken. The school has an accurate assessment of the areas for development necessary to bring about the rapid improvement required.
- A range of initiatives has been put in place to improve writing and the school is part of a consortium to improve writing. This is beginning to pay dividends.
- Senior leaders are now providing strong support and challenge and making their higher expectations clear to teachers. This is not yet the case for all middle leaders. They are not consistently driving improvement in their areas of responsibility and some currently lack the skills to do so.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities that their topic lessons offer, such as making Tudor trenchers and pomanders. However, the curriculum does not have a clear plan for developing writing and mathematical skills within topics. The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped.
- A clear and robust performance management system, appropriate training and strong leadership have ensured that all teachers know that good teaching is an expectation. Leaders have tackled weaker teaching through well-planned training and monitoring. Consequently, teaching is improving. The expectation is clear to all staff that this improvement will continue.
- A new tracking system and class-setting arrangements ensure that teachers are now accountable for the progress of all of their pupils. This progress is checked six times a year at meetings, with new support agreed if necessary. This targeting of support based on clear information is starting to improve the progress of pupils but more needs to be done in setting high aspirations to accelerate the progress of all pupils. The information available from the Early Years Foundation Stage is not as useful because it is not always clear how this is linked to assessments of children's skills.
- The school has used a range of external training, coaching, and support from the local authority and external advisers to improve leadership and teaching. This is starting to make a difference and middle leaders are beginning to lead their areas more effectively. As a result the school is building its own capacity to improve without external support.
- Funding for developing sports and PE has been planned to develop teachers' expertise and skills as well as provide rich learning experiences to the pupils. This is appropriate because the PE observed was taught by an external provider who lacked the knowledge to make appropriate and useful links to other areas of the curriculum.
- A survey of parents' and carers' views shows that they think the school looks after their children well but they are not so clear about the progress their children make. The parent forum is helpful in strengthening good relationships with the leadership of the school, including governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are committed to supporting school leaders but they are not holding the school robustly to account. They understand that recent changes should have happened sooner and have been unsettling. Governors understand the strengths of the school and are frank about the areas that need improving. They support the relentless drive to develop all teaching to be at least good and know that this is vital in making sure that all pupils progress well. They understand the role of a strong performance management system as part of this process. Governors have been proactive in asking for data and have asked the school to ensure that there is a consistency in the format so that they are confident that they can track changes from one meeting to the next. They know this is important so that they can ask the right questions and challenge the school in a supportive and informed manner. They know how the pupil premium is spent but do not know the full impact of this funding or when actions need to be changed. The governors do not yet have a clear picture of 2013 results.

## 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>	118313
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	426462

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	437
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Clare Wakeling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cathy Farthing
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01580 891765
<b>Fax number</b>	01580 891291
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@staplehurst.kent.sch.uk



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