

Stafford Junior School

1, Ringwood Road, Eastbourne, BN22 8UA

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is too variable within and across year groups.
- Pupils are not always confident to spell accurately or use the correct punctuation in their written work. Not all pupils take care in the way they present or record their work.
- Work is not always matched to the different skills and abilities of all pupils, particularly the more able to help accelerate their learning. This means that these pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they are able.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not always use information about pupils' understanding well enough to plan their next steps in learning.
- Pupils are not always confident or quick to solve mathematical problems or number facts.
- Guidance to help pupils improve their work varies in quality. Marking does not consistently ensure pupils are clear about how to improve their work or check that pupils respond to and act upon any comments made.

The school has the following strengths:

- Standards have risen substantially and are much higher than nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress of pupils who receive additional funding and those disabled or with special educational needs is better than their peers' nationally.
- Pupils behave well and say they feel safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is a strength.
- Despite some aspects being slow to improve, senior leaders, aided by a consultant headteacher, are challenged by governors more effectively. Teaching, pupils' learning and achievement are now showing clear improvement.
- Middle leaders identify weaknesses and lead improvements more effectively than before.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons or part lessons including five jointly with senior leaders. They observed small-group 'catch-up' sessions led by teaching assistants.
- Inspectors talked with pupils and listened to some Key Stage 2 pupils reading. Pupils' current work and assessments were scrutinised. Inspectors also observed pupils at lunchtime and during break times.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the core senior leaders, middle leaders, and the Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair. Inspectors also gathered views from the executive consultant headteacher. Inspectors talked with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 77 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and also had informal conversations with many parents and carers who attended the school picnic held on the Friday afternoon of the inspection.
- The inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sheila Browning, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Baxter

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Cooper

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs several after-school clubs.
- There has been some significant staff absence and turnover of staff.
- The partnership with a local secondary school has been extended. The executive headteacher of the secondary school continues to be the executive headteacher who oversees the partnership. He is also a National Leader of Education. The partner secondary school continues to provide senior staff, including the acting headteacher, associate headteacher and deputy headteacher. In September 2013, a new core senior leadership team was created by the appointment of an associate headteacher. A substantive deputy headteacher has since been appointed for September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that typically it is at least good by:
 - ensuring all teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve and the way work is marked and presented in all subjects
 - ensuring that all pupils are challenged and motivated by the tasks set, particularly the most able, to boost their learning and progress.
- Improve pupils' achievement, so that more learn at a faster rate by:
 - teachers consistently following up pupils' correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects
 - increasing pupils' ability to recall mathematical facts rapidly and enhancing pupils' skills and understanding, such as in using times tables when solving problems
 - making sure pupils are clear as to how to reach their next steps in reading, writing and mathematics
 - ensuring the school's marking policy is consistently applied
 - teachers consistently checking that pupils have responded to and acted on the advice given through marking.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress requires improvement because it is inconsistent within and between different year groups. Although some more-able pupils achieve well, too few reach the levels they are capable of. This is because they often cover the same work as other pupils and so their learning is not extended.
- All pupils do not show confidence in their spelling, punctuation and grammar or always take care in how their work is presented in their books. Pupils are not always clear about how to solve simple number problems based on times tables, and few appear to know them confidently.
- From their different starting points, the proportions of pupils making expected progress has improved over the last two years. A higher proportion make better progress than before. Some have made rapid progress across all subjects, particularly within the last six months. This is because of the school's greater focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Progress checks show that current Year 6 pupils reach higher levels than similar aged pupils have in the past two years. Year 6 achievement in mathematics is stronger with some pupils achieving the higher Level 6. In reading, pupils' achievement is closer to national expectations.
- Pupils supported by additional funding are ahead of their classmates. Gaps have rapidly closed reflecting the school's focus on their needs and additional support and staffing.
- Standards continue to rise and remain above national expectations in reading and mathematics. In 2013 standards in writing were significantly above average. Progress in writing is above national expectations and is currently good, reflecting improvements in teaching and learning.
- Pupils who need extra help with their learning, including those who have special educational needs, achieve significantly better than their peers nationally in mathematics, reading and writing combined, and significantly above in grammar. This demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating any discrimination.
- Pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds letters make) has improved because teaching and support are better focused on developing pupils' skills in phonics. Pupils use this knowledge to read new words. Across the school, pupils enjoy reading a variety of book styles and genres. Year 6 pupils confidently tackle new texts.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is consistently good over time to accelerate pupils' progress more rapidly and so requires improvement. This is especially true for the progress of the most-able pupils who are capable of harder work, as they are not always challenged to do their best.
- Although work in pupils' books shows more rapid progress from last September, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and in adherence to the school's marking policy. Sometimes work is accepted that is not good enough. Misconceptions and errors are missed and marking does not help pupils to know how to improve their work. In some classes marking is of a good standard; it is constructive, helps pupils to move on and pupils act on any advice given. This is not yet the norm in all classes.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially those more able, are sometimes too low. Some teachers do not use progress information well enough to set work matched to pupils' different abilities or to identify gaps in knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This means pupils are not as confident when learning new skills.
- There are signs that some pupils are benefiting from more effective teaching and learning. The school's progress information reflects this and is directly linked to the leaders' determination and the improved systems for checking pupils' attainment, progress and the quality of teaching.
- Some teachers provide clear explanations so that pupils know what they are going to learn. Questions are used well to check pupils' understanding. Pupils listen carefully and are interested. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils shared their ideas before writing a report about

an imaginary beast. They used a wide range of descriptive vocabulary, connectives and compound sentences to make their writing come alive.

- Significant improvements in the identification of, and provision for, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensure that their needs are more closely met. Teaching assistants generally provide good quality focused support to boost their learning further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and friendly. Unsurprisingly, pupils have positive attitudes to learning when teaching challenges and engages their interests. They enjoy being peer mediators, buddies, helpers and school councillors.
- Occasionally, teachers and extra adults do not ensure that pupils with complex behavioural needs are consistently well managed, which can slow learning for others. Pupils confirmed this.
- Pupils confidently told inspectors what they liked and disliked about the school and what took place typically. Most comments were very positive, especially about the recent changes. They particularly liked the increased sports and extra-curricular clubs. They commented on the many staff changes and said, 'We are expected to work harder.' Many said they enjoyed using the school's 'Home Learning' website. The school council members said staff listen to them carefully and take note of their suggestions. Councillors said how pleased they are to have the scooter and bike racks they had suggested.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep safe, and know about e-safety. Pupils show a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. They say, 'A little name calling takes place but it is dealt with quickly.'
- Pupils and some parents and carers say that behaviour occasionally slips. Scrutiny of the school's behaviour logs and records supports an improved picture, and this is resulting in pupils' improved progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils develop an appreciation of the arts and sports in a variety of ways. They show a healthy respect for one another. Many play musical instruments, take part in competitions and events. The school picnic was a good example of how well pupils mix with adults and others, whether sharing rides on the miniature train, face painting or eating and playing together.

The leadership and management are good

- The new core leadership team provides strong, effective leadership, but realises the changes it has introduced still need time to take full effect. Leaders have provided stability and made sure that teachers are more accountable for the progress of the pupils they teach.
- The school's self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Leaders are acutely aware that teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should. Systems to reward only good or better teaching are rigorously applied. Leaders observe teaching regularly. They have put in place intensive support and coaching for staff to put the school on the path of having typically good teaching. While some teachers have welcomed such support, not all have risen to the higher expectations and leaders have faced some significant resistance from staff. Leaders have not held back on making some difficult, but necessary, decisions when little or no improvement has been made.
- Senior leaders redesigned the timetable to reduce time wastage and created additional daily lessons. The resulting extra time given for literacy and numeracy has already resulted in improvements in the quality and quantity of pupils' work compared to earlier in the year.
- The roles of middle leaders are relatively new, and they are building on their expertise and skills. Their opportunities to monitor and to lead improvements have increased with some notable impact on reading, writing and mathematics standards.
- Good use is made of primary school sports funding to improve the quality and opportunity for

pupils to be coached in sports. Many participate in clubs and increasingly in competitions. This is helping to improve their health and well-being.

- Very good support and advice are provided by the consultant executive headteacher who is also a National Leader of Education. The local authority has also provided good support for the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. Governors have not flinched from taking strategic decisions to maintain the school's stability and improvement. They extended the contract with the local partner school rather than appoint leaders that fell short of the calibre they wanted. To ensure continuity, they appointed a deputy headteacher for September 2014. The governing body has restructured and is led by an experienced and knowledgeable Chair of the Governing Body. Governors understand the school's performance information and can make national and local comparisons. They make good use of this information to challenge and hold leaders to account. They recognise the urgency to secure consistently good and better teaching in order to ensure good progress. They understand that teachers' pay rises must be linked to the progress pupils make and some teachers have not been recommended for this. All statutory requirements are met including for safeguarding. The budget is carefully monitored to ensure that the primary school sports funding and pupil premium funds are used to provide best value and ensure equality.

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	114469
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	442450

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Frankham
Headteacher	Beruk Berhane
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 October 2012
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