

# Stone Cross School

Adur Drive, Stone Cross, Eastbourne, BN24 5EF

**Inspection dates** 24–25 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils' work and school information for 2014 show that standards have improved on the previous year, most notably in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders, including governors, make sure that teaching is typically good so that pupils enjoy learning and achieve well.
- Children get a good start to their school lives in the Reception classes.
- The school ensures that pupils are very well looked after and safe. Relationships are warm and trusting. Staff exhibit a high level of professionalism.
- Pupils are well behaved and have positive attitudes to learning. They are proud of their well-kept school and the high-quality displays of their work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed very successfully through subjects and an impressive range of activities and visits.
- The school is changing the way subjects are taught in line with new national guidance. The carefully designed programmes of work develop pupils' numeracy and literacy skills well through different subjects.
- Governors visit the school regularly to see the work of staff and pupils. They provide a good balance of help and challenge.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is not always set at the right level to ensure pupils, especially the most able, make the very best progress they can.
- Pupils do not always respond to the guidance they are given in marking.
- Teaching assistants are not equally effective in supporting pupils' learning in lessons.

## Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in 22 lessons. An assembly was also observed. Some observations were joint visits with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the subject leader for mathematics.
- An extensive sample of pupils' work, including all classes from the last academic year and this year, was examined by inspectors.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and three members of the governing body. One meeting with pupils was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for pupils to read aloud.
- Informal discussions with pupils took place at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of 53 electronic and 15 handwritten responses to the questionnaire (Parent View), as well as other communications from parents and the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Parents' involvement in school life was discussed with senior leaders.
- A range of documentation was looked at including records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Keith Homewood	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- In this larger-than-average primary school, the large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has been a local leader of education for the past five years.
- For the past two years the headteacher has been the executive headteacher of another school. This arrangement has now concluded.
- The school is a member of an alliance of local schools.
- The school has just been invited to be a strategic partner with Cuckmere House Teaching School.

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

- Improve teaching so that pupils' progress continues to accelerate by ensuring:
  - work is appropriately challenging, especially for the most able pupils
  - pupils respond to the guidance they are given in marking
  - teaching assistants are equally skilful in supporting pupils' learning in lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. They regularly review the work of the school and are ambitious for its success. Pupils' accelerating progress and rising standards demonstrate their capacity to secure improvement.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching because of the frequent and rigorous checks that they make. The management of staff's performance is thorough. The targets set for staff are challenging and any progression or increased pay is dependent on them being achieved.
- Staff appreciate the good opportunities for development and are unreservedly supportive of senior leaders. Morale is high and teamwork is a strength of the school.
- The school is outward looking and seeks to contribute to school improvement in the wider community. To this end, the headteacher has a role as a local leader of education and has been the executive headteacher of another school. The school has recently been invited to be a strategic partner with Cuckmere House Teaching School. The breadth of partnerships with other schools has supported teachers' development at Stone Cross by giving them the chance to share expertise and best practice.
- The roles of staff with additional responsibilities are clear and they fulfil their duties well. Middle leaders have an effective focus on driving up standards in their areas.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and improvement plans concentrate on the right priorities.
- Programmes of work foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils welcome responsibility and understand how their actions may affect others. They respect different lifestyles and beliefs and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary sports funding is used effectively to support the employment of a physical education specialist three afternoons a week. As a result, staff have developed their skills and the range of physical activities available to pupils has been extended. Participation rates are very high. Dance and gymnastics are particular favourites.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully. Discrimination is not tolerated. Whatever their background or needs may be, pupils learn well and are fully involved in school life.
- Strong and productive partnerships with parents are central to the school's values and beliefs. Parents are well informed about their children's learning and are very supportive of the school. Nearly all those who completed the inspection questionnaire would recommend the school to others.
- The school has received good support from the local authority. Training in assessing and moderating pupils' writing has been especially beneficial.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and how it can improve. They ask leaders challenging questions about standards and review data about the school's performance regularly.
  - From their visits, governors know that teaching is typically good with some aspects that could be improved further. They know about teachers' strengths and development needs and only agree to a teacher's pay rise when pupils achieve well consistently.
  - Finances are managed with prudence and in the best interests of pupils. Governors know exactly how extra funding from the government for sport and disadvantaged pupils is spent and they check that pupils' experiences and learning improve accordingly.
  - Governors attend training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively including those relating to safeguarding.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to come to such a welcoming and supportive environment. Pupils are well equipped on arrival, have smart uniforms and take pride in their school and work.
- Pupils show respect for each other and adults. They are courteous and serious-minded when it comes to shouldering responsibility. They help out with the day-to-day running of the school and make an important contribution to its harmonious atmosphere by acting as mentors to younger children and peer mediators.

- Pupils understand the clear system of rewards and consequences and think it is effective.
- Attendance is above average and there have been no exclusions in recent years.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All procedures for ensuring pupils' health, safety and well-being are securely in place.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and the different forms it can take, such as name-calling and cyber bullying. Pupils say bullying is rare and this is borne out by the school's records of incidents over time.
- Pupils greatly value the caring relationships they have with staff and are confident that if they had any problems they would be sorted out quickly.
- Almost all parents say their children feel safe and happy in school.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to explain things clearly and develop pupils' understanding.
- The good progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils is supported through effective one-to-one tuition and small group work.
- The successful focus on sharpening subject knowledge in mathematics has contributed to pupils' improved achievement in the subject.
- Learning activities are planned thoroughly and supported by a range of high-quality resources.
- Communication skills are refined through structured discussion. Pupils exchange and develop their ideas in pairs or small groups with enthusiasm.
- The organisation of classrooms and displays, including of pupils' work, support learning very well. Routines are established and there are high levels of trust between teachers, assistants and pupils. All of this encourages pupils to persevere with their learning and not be afraid of making mistakes.
- Reading is taught effectively. Daily sessions are structured and well paced. Lively activities to develop pupils' grasp of how sounds and letters are linked help pupils to maintain their concentration.
- Pupils enjoy being creative in their writing and evaluating their own and others' work. A good example of this was seen when Year 6 pupils made rapid progress in writing short stories through sharing what they had written to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of support pupils receive from teaching assistants in lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2. Some assistants are highly effective in developing pupils' skills and understanding but others miss opportunities to move pupils on to a higher level of learning.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and generally there is clear guidance for improvement. However, pupils do not always respond to teachers' comments.
- Occasionally, pupils find that work is either too hard or too easy for them and they do not learn to the best of their ability. This is particularly true for the most able pupils where work is not always challenging enough.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' progress has accelerated rapidly over the last year as a result of improving teaching. Most pupils are making either good or outstanding progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's information and pupils' work, which was extensively scrutinised by inspectors, show that variation in pupils' progress in recent years, particularly in mathematics and writing, has been addressed successfully.
- In 2013, at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment overall was broadly average and weakest in writing. In 2014, school information shows a marked improvement, including in writing.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) show standards in 2013 were below the national average. This year shows a substantial improvement in the numbers achieving the expected standard.
- Most pupils have good phonics skills and are able to read words accurately. This is helping pupils to spell,

punctuate and use grammar correctly. Pupils are skilled in writing for different purposes across subjects.

- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed very well through participation in purposeful, structured discussion.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of carefully planned and individualised support.
- More able pupils make good progress. However, some of the most able pupils do not always achieve the exceptionally high standards they could. This is because teachers' guidance and the work they are given do not always recognise their higher starting points in learning.
- In 2013, nearly two thirds of the few eligible for the pupil premium had special educational needs. While these pupils generally made good progress, there was a significant gap of some five terms between their attainment and that of their classmates and pupils' nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers have ensured that in 2014, the gap in attainment has narrowed considerably.

### The early years provision

is good

- Although children join the Reception classes at varying levels of development, the children who joined the school in September 2013 had skills and knowledge typical for their age, as do those who have just started this year.
- As a result of effective teaching, children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, make good progress in all areas of learning and thrive. In 2013, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was in line with the national level. In 2014, the proportion increased very substantially.
- Supportive relationships and close partnership with parents ensure that children are happy, confident and enjoy learning. During the inspection, although children had only been in school a short time, they had settled quickly into routines and were working co-operatively with staff and each other.
- The skilful promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development ensures behaviour is good.
- The quality of teaching is good in this key stage. There is an effective balance of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to explore and find things out for themselves. The stimulating environment, both indoors and outdoors, supports learning well. Adults rigorously check the progress children make and use this information to plan activities that extend their skills.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Staff are well trained and work as an effective team.

## 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>	114484
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	443898

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>	420
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kenneth Saxby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Allison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10–11 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 461002
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