

# Stoke Mandeville Combined School

Lower Road, Stoke Mandeville HP22 5XA

## Inspection dates

February 9–10 2016

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good                 |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Requires improvement |
| Early years provision                        | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good                 |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders are not yet working as a team and have not gained the support of some staff. As a result, some areas of the school have not improved quickly enough.
- In 2015, some pupils did not make the rapid progress of which they were capable from Key Stage 1 to 2, especially in writing.
- Too few pupils attained Level 5 in mathematics and reading, and in English spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 was too low in writing in 2015. According to the school's tracking, writing remains weaker than reading and mathematics.
- Outcomes in early years provision in 2015 were below average. Some teachers and assistants do not provide children with enough challenge.
- Communication within the school and with parents is improving but needs to develop further, as does the communication between the headteacher and staff.
- Too many leaders are accountable for the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, so these pupils are not making as much progress as other pupils.
- The quality of teaching remains too variable.
- In all areas of the school, assessment requires improvement. Assessment information is not used well enough by teachers or school leaders.
- Until recently, the local authority did not monitor the impact of the support they provide to ensure that it was having the required effect. This meant that some important issues, which needed their direct assistance, got worse.
- Governors have improved the way they oversee the school's work. However, there remain areas of the school's work which require governors to make far-reaching changes.

### The school has the following strengths

- The way pupils behave around the school and in class is good. They are a credit to the school.
- The headteacher rigorously oversees safeguarding and ensures that pupils get the support they need.
- The headteacher's monitoring of teaching has
- The headteacher's efforts to run a tighter ship, including improving the hearing-impaired department, have been effective.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well.

led to some improvements.

## Full report

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

- Improve the teaching of all aspects of writing, including English, grammar, punctuation and spelling, to raise pupils' achievement.
- Improve the quality and use of assessment by:
  - teachers making better use of assessment information to plan tasks that are sufficiently challenging, but also allow any gaps in learning to be promptly filled
  - teachers and assistants explaining clearly the purpose of tasks and what pupils need to do to complete them successfully
  - leaders checking what impact the school's policy is having on pupils' learning
  - continuing to develop the new approach to assessment so that teachers use it confidently and it accurately tracks pupils' progress.
  - leaders gathering and using information on pupils' progress to evaluate whether agreed approaches are working, to identify subjects and classes where teaching is weaker and to make sure pupils who are falling behind get the help they need to catch up.
- Leaders and governors should further enhance the impact that leaders at all levels make on improving the school by:
  - establishing clearly defined areas of responsibility for senior and middle leaders within an effective team structure
  - improving communication with both the parent and staff bodies, especially the means by which stakeholders share their concerns and leaders respond to them
  - sharpening the school development plan to focus on pupils' learning and achievement, with clear targets and milestones that can be monitored by leaders and governors
  - enhancing the roles of newly appointed subject leaders and providing them, and the new Key Stage 1 leader, with the right level of support needed to carry out their roles well
  - monitoring the impact of the improved support provided by the local authority, and promptly asking the authority to provide additional assistance if it is needed.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since joining the school, the headteacher has ensured that the school is better organised and the school environment is enhanced so it supports pupils' learning more effectively. She has made sure that the substantial number of new staff who have joined since her inception settle in well. However, the staff body does not yet work well together and communication between leaders and both the staff and parent bodies is not always effective.
- The headteacher has made a number of effective changes to staffing, as well as to staff roles and responsibilities. This has meant that some staff have been able to focus their work more precisely. For example, the deputy headteacher has a new role raising achievement in literacy and is no longer a class teacher. This has led to improvements in reading. The headteacher acknowledges that some of these changes have led to friction between staff and leaders, which has recently begun to lessen. However, some staffing issues remain unresolved and some leaders' roles need further clarification.
- In some areas leadership is disjointed, with some divided responsibilities and lack of clear accountability. For example, the oversight of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is fragmented and this has resulted in these pupils doing less well than their peers nationally in 2015 Key Stage 2 tests. Similarly, responsibilities for disadvantaged pupils are blurred. This means that the impact of the additional support provided for this group is not well enough monitored and evaluated and, consequently, leaders do not use these checks to inform future plans.
- The headteacher has successfully set challenging targets for pupils' progress. She introduced an easy-to-use method of assessing and recording pupils' progress towards these targets. Leaders made good use of this to identify those who needed additional help to meet their challenging targets. However, this approach did not provide the information they needed to gain an effective overview of the progress of different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The headteacher has successfully used her links with other schools to provide teachers with opportunities to check that they are using the new method for assessing pupils' work without levels accurately. Some teachers are now more confident and are using the new approach well. There are strong plans in place for teachers who have greater expertise in the new method of assessment to provide teachers who need more guidance with additional support. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these plans.
- The early years leader has only recently been appointed and, despite some improvements in the organisation of the setting, she has not yet ensured that teachers and assistants are using the information gathered from their assessments of children's learning effectively enough.
- The headteacher has strengthened the way teaching is monitored. The checks made on teaching are rigorous and include a focus on pupils' progress as shown in their books. The headteacher's evaluation of the quality of teaching is largely accurate and feeds into the annual review of teachers' performance, which is now more rigorous. This is leading to some better teaching.
- The headteacher has implemented an effective programme of whole-school training for teachers and teaching assistants. However, teachers, including those newly qualified, and teaching assistants, are not routinely provided with more targeted training for their individual professional development.
- Support from the local authority has, in the past, not been well enough targeted on the specific needs of the school and there has been limited monitoring by the local authority or governors of the impact of the support provided. More recent support has been targeted more effectively and is focused on helping newly appointed leaders to strengthen their impact.
- The headteacher has improved the curriculum so that it is more varied and includes creative subjects such as music and art appreciation. Some staff need further guidance to inform their teaching in these areas, so that they know which assessment tasks will best enable pupils to demonstrate their new subject knowledge. Teachers do not always successfully reinforce literacy and numeracy skills in wider, non-core subject lessons. This is because opportunities are not always included as part of the planning. Subject leadership of these areas is relatively new and is stronger in some subjects such as ICT, where pupils are successfully developing their understanding of programming.

- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Fundamental British values are effectively promoted through well-received assemblies, planned and led by the pupils, as well as through dedicated units of work in the personal development programme. The headteacher has used external agencies to ensure that important messages about tolerance and equality are reinforced.
- The curriculum is well augmented by visits and a wide range of clubs, for example pupils have the opportunity to participate in martial arts and archery clubs. There is also a well-run breakfast and after-school club.
- The leadership of the hearing-impaired department is effective. Assistants work well with class teachers to ensure that hearing-impaired pupils have full access to the learning. When supporting pupils in class, assistants make very good use of visual aids as the focus of their questioning.
- The headteacher has effectively improved relationships with parents, through introducing class representatives to strengthen liaison between school and home. Consequently, responses on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) indicated that the vast majority of parents would recommend this school to other parents. A few parents commented that, although they support the direction in which the headteacher is taking the school, further improvements were needed in communication between the school and parent body.
- Additional sports funding is used well. The physical education subject leader has a clear overview of what the funding is being spent on and there is evidence that pupils are developing their skills in a range of sports, as individuals and in teams. Teachers' practice in physical education has benefited from the links with a local secondary school.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance is improving under the new Chair of the Governing Body's supervision and following a review conducted by the local authority. This was wide-ranging and thorough and pinpointed specific areas for development, such as governors' ability to work strategically, rather than focusing on day-to-day business.
  - The governing body has implemented a number of recommendations from this review, for example governors now make visits to the school to look at pupils' work in books. Consequently, governors have used their improved knowledge to ask for changes to be made, such as the deployment of pupil premium funding to make a greater impact on pupils' achievement. However, a number of key areas identified in the governance review as requiring development still need further work.
  - Governance is better organised and governors now monitor specific areas of the school so they can build up their knowledge and expertise. However, their effectiveness is limited by the lack of clear milestones. Crucially, they have not ensured that the confidence they have in the headteacher's leadership is shared by all stakeholders.
- The headteacher places a strong focus on ensuring that pupils are well educated about risks and dangers they may encounter, drawing on the expertise of specialists including the police. The headteacher has undertaken significant training on the government's 'Prevent' agenda and this has enabled her to ensure that the staff are appropriately trained in the 'Prevent' duty.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher carefully oversees the care of those referred to the local authority for protection. She determinedly ensures that referrals to social services are prompt and that careful records are kept of actions taken and outcomes achieved. She also monitors closely how well the support is working to ensure that the assistance provided by the local authority is at the right level. The headteacher rightly seeks advice and guidance on safeguarding issues from the local authority and assiduously follows the guidance given.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching varies too much between year group and subjects. The teaching of reading and mathematics is stronger than that of writing and other subjects. This demonstrates that some, but not all, subjects indicated as weaker in 2015 test and examination results are improving.
- Teachers' use of assessment is weak across all subjects. Teachers do not make enough use of their day-to-day assessment of pupils' learning when planning lessons, so that work is sometimes too easy or too difficult. Sometimes, pupils are not clear enough about what they are learning when completing the tasks they are set. Teachers do not always make it clear what pupils need to do to carry out the task really well.
- The school's policy on providing pupils with feedback is followed consistently, but leaders have not checked well enough the impact of the policy on pupils' learning. For example, teachers provide follow-up questions and comments on the work they mark as part of the policy. However, on occasion, teachers' comments show weak subject knowledge or lack focus on the purpose of the work being assessed. This is most notable in comments about writing.
- The questions teachers pose for pupils are sometimes limiting, especially those they ask to check whether pupils understand their explanation of the task they have set for pupils to complete. This is because they are not probing enough to identify fully whether pupils are clear enough about what they have to do and how best to do it.
- The teaching of reading in Year 1 is an area of strength and has led to an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics test, which tests pupils' understanding of the links between letters and the sounds they make.
- Additional help given to readers in Key Stage 2, in small groups, is helping them to develop greater fluency and confidence. This is one of a number of effective new approaches to reading that have been introduced by the deputy headteacher. However, teachers have not been as successful in enabling pupils to make the transition from phonics knowledge to an understanding of spelling rules.
- Effective teaching of mathematics was based on the acquisition of fluency in using number and solving problems through trial and error, for example. This tactic was supporting pupils in Year 6 to gain confidence in adding fractions and progress was strong as a result.
- In the majority of lessons, pupils present their work neatly and are proud of what they achieve. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said they enjoy learning and welcome the fact that, more recently, a greater focus has been placed on acquiring new skills and knowledge.
- Teaching in the early years is not challenging enough for some children, because teachers and assistants do not use the knowledge they gain from their ongoing assessments of children's development to plan activities that are stretching.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well motivated to come to school and, consequently, pupils attend well and are punctual.
- Pupils are able to work well in small groups and share ideas. They treat each other with respect. They can take turns when talking in a group and are able to build on or challenge the views expressed by their peers.
- There is a well-run breakfast club, which provides a calm and happy place for pupils at the start of the day.
- Pupils reported to inspectors that they felt safe around the school and knew how to keep safe when online. They are provided with good information about where to get help on issues that may prove challenging as they grow up.
- The school is free from prejudice and there are very few incidents of bullying. Pupils know who they can talk to if they think they are being bullied, including a team of older pupils who are mentors and readily available for the younger children at play times.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, but more could be done to help them thrive as learners by developing their intellectual curiosity.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, both around school and in most classes. This is an orderly school, where children socialise and work together in a very sensible manner. Pupils also interact well with adults. Pupils and parents agree that behaviour is good.
- Occasionally, unsettled behaviour in lessons is associated with work that is too easy or tasks that are not explained clearly. Even when this was the case, pupils responded well to the teachers' requests to listen better and talk less.
- Behaviour records indicate that the vast majority of issues are minor and are dealt with promptly and effectively. However, leaders are not using these records to analyse and act on any identifiable patterns of misbehaviour.

## Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- In 2015, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 had declined when compared with 2014, with particular weakness in writing.
- In Key Stage 2 in 2015, a below-average proportion of pupils made the progress necessary to achieve Level 5 in mathematics and reading, and in English punctuation, grammar and spelling. This represents a decline from 2014. Pupils' overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics was slower than that of other similar pupils nationally. However, from broadly average starting points, pupils' progress was in line with minimum expectations and, consequently, the proportion achieving Level 4 and above was average.
- Pupils' work from lessons since September, and the school's own tracking from the autumn term, indicated that pupils' progress in writing, and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, has not improved enough since 2015. It also indicated that, in a minority of classes, some pupils' progress is weak in numeracy. However, the majority of pupils were making stronger progress across the school in reading, as a result of work done to improve reading skills.
- In 2015, due to better phonics teaching, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above national average and showed big improvements on 2014 results.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and who are not part of the hearing-impaired department, do not do as well as they could at the school. In 2015, their progress was slower than pupils nationally who have similar starting points. In part, this is because their progress in small steps is not measured accurately. The school's current assessments of the progress made by these pupils are contradictory.
- Pupils who are supported in the hearing-impaired department generally make more rapid progress than other pupils with additional needs. Pupils with hearing impairments are well supported in lessons and through the work they do in the hearing-impaired department itself, so that they fully access the same learning as others in the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils are provided with additional help, but the number of pupils eligible in each year group is too small to analyse the impact of the support. The school's data suggest that they make broadly the same progress as other pupils.

## Early years provision

### requires improvement

- In 2015, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development dropped to below the national average. The standards some children are currently reaching are not high enough to suggest that this figure will rise significantly in 2016. Disadvantaged pupils are targeted for additional support, but the number of pupils eligible in Reception is too small to make reliable comparisons between their attainment and others'. Although children have learned routines that will help them when they join Year 1, last year too many lacked the other skills necessary to settle in quickly and achieve well at school.
- There has been turbulence in the staffing of the early years setting, including in its leadership. This has led to a lack of rigour in monitoring provision and children's progress, and using this information strategically to ensure well-targeted action. The new Key Stage 1 leader is working closely with a consultant from the local authority to improve the leadership of the setting. This

work is in its infancy and has not yet had an impact.

- Staff in the setting ensure that routines are well rehearsed, so that very little time is lost in transitions from one activity to another. Children are highly motivated by the good structures and routines. They share well and cooperate with each other. Attendance levels are high in the setting and behaviour is good. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress. There are effective safeguarding procedures and children are safe.
- There has been too much time invested in some routines, such as tidying up. This means that while children cooperate well with each other, a number are not making the strides they should in their learning. In particular, some children who join the setting with skills and abilities that exceed age-related expectations are not making the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Children are well motivated to learn because leaders, teachers and assistants plan a wide range of activities for them. However, adults' questioning sometimes fails to build on these activities. In addition, the scope of planned play activities is somewhat limited by the outdoor play area. The play area does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to combine play and learning, for example practising mark making.
- Teachers' and assistants' assessments of learning gains are insufficiently thorough and are not well used to plan learning. Consequently, some opportunities to plan additional challenges for the most able are missed and their progress slows.

## School details

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 1003598         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Buckinghamshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 110249          |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| <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> | 207  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Local authority  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mr Scott Day   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mrs Eileen Stewart   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01296 612371   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.stokemandeville.bucks.sch.uk">www.stokemandeville.bucks.sch.uk</a>       |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:office@stokemandeville.bucks.sch.uk">office@stokemandeville.bucks.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 15 June 2011   |

## Information about this school

- Stoke Mandeville Combined School is a smaller than average-sized primary school, with one-form entry.
- The school has an additional resource for pupils and children who are hearing impaired. There are currently 10 pupils who attend the additional resource base. The majority receive full-time support in lessons in the main school. A small number receive the majority of learning in the additional resource base.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staffing changes, including a new headteacher who took up post in September 2014. At the same time a new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding is significantly below the national average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- There is a before-and after-school club that operates on the school site. This is managed by the school's governing body.
- The proportion of pupils that are from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for special educational needs or disability support is below average, but the proportion with statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans, is above average.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning during lessons in each class. Shorter visits were made to observe the teaching in the early years setting, and to see the additional resource for pupils whose hearing is impaired. Pupils were also observed in assembly, at break times and around the school.
- The team met formally with a group of pupils and spoke to many others informally. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 were heard reading.
- Inspectors visited the before- and after-school club, which operates on the school site and is overseen by the school's leaders and governors.
- Inspectors examined a variety of documentation, particularly that related to the school development plan, the school's own evaluation and reports from external visits made by local authority consultants, the local authority's review of governance, pupils' progress and how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The team held meetings with members of staff, including subject leaders and teaching assistants and with several members of the governing body. An inspector also met with two different representatives of the local authority on two separate occasions.
- The team took note of 53 replies to the online survey, Parent View, and studied the written comments that parents made online. The results of 20 returns from a survey of pupils' opinions were considered, as well as 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector

Eileen Northey

Ross McDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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