

Stifford Clays Primary School

Whitmore Avenue, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex RM16 2ST

Inspection dates	9–10 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress across the school. From starting points that are broadly average, pupils leave with standards in mathematics and English that are above average.
- The headteacher and his senior colleagues have made important improvements to the school in the recent past. Teaching has improved as a result.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The provision for two-year-old pupils is very effective.
- Leaders and teachers track pupils' progress carefully and intervene quickly when pupils fall behind.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy school and are positive about their lessons.
- Leaders know the school well. They have clear systems in place to check on the quality of teaching.
- The governing body are holding school leaders to account for the impact of their work systematically.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and look after their welfare is thorough and effective.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet good in all classes. Changes in staffing have led to some classes experiencing several different teachers in a short space of time.
- Some subjects in the National Curriculum are not as well taught as others.
- Leaders do not have enough time to follow up all of the improvement points that they identify when checking on the quality of teaching.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching in all subjects matches that of mathematics and English.
- Provide leaders with more time to follow up the outcomes of their monitoring activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has made improvements to all parts of the school's work and is a key factor in the progress that has been made. His vision and direction are clearly communicated and the school has moved forward in a cohesive manner.
- Senior leaders are ambitious for the school to continue improving. Their close monitoring of the progress that pupils make contributes to their targeted use of interventions; where pupils, or groups of pupils, are not doing as well as they might, support is provided.
- Leaders are good role models for other staff and pupils. They reflect the school's values and encourage colleagues and pupils to do the same. As a result of difficulties in recruiting high-quality teachers last year, some of the senior leaders have returned to the classroom to ensure that the quality of teaching remains good. These senior leaders set a high standard of teaching in addition to fulfilling many of their leadership roles and duties.
- The work that leaders do to monitor the quality of teaching is systematic and well organised. Each year group is the subject of an extensive evaluation on a roughly termly basis. The reports that result from this are clear and identify with precision what needs to be done to improve. The next step in this process is not as clear, as leaders do not have sufficient time to follow up their improvement points and make sure that things get better swiftly. This is partially because leaders have already moved on to the next year group and also because many of them have significant teaching commitments.
- The curriculum is planned so that all subjects are provided with adequate teaching time across each year group. In practice, however, some subjects are taught less frequently than others, and some are taught less well. Leaders are aware of this and are using training to increase teachers' subject knowledge across the range of subjects. More monitoring of the curriculum coverage is required to ensure that every subject in the National Curriculum is taught for an appropriate amount of time.
- Pupils are keen to take up the offer of extra-curricular activities. Several of these activities involve sports and some take place before school starts as well as after it ends.
- Parents who responded to the online inspection questionnaire were predominantly positive about almost all aspects of the school. Of the 58 who responded, about a quarter would not recommend the school to another parent. This is in conflict with the evidence from a much larger number of parents (155) who recently responded to a school-based questionnaire, where the proportion of positive responses was extremely high.
- Leaders, including governors, deploy the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and the sports premium carefully. They monitor the impact of their spending and are creative about how they can maximise the impact. A sports company, for example, offers pupils with disabilities high-quality coaching in order that they, too, can benefit from the funding.
- The promotion of fundamental British values is central to the school's ethos. These are signposted around the school and leaders and teachers are explicit about how these values are an essential part of life in modern Britain. Alongside this, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also considered to be a priority and this is reflected in the harmonious and welcoming environment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has improved considerably since the previous inspection
 - increasingly holds leaders to account for their work
 - is focused on school improvement on a strategic rather than day-to-day level
 - oversees the school's arrangements for managing the performance of teachers and ensures that the targets that teachers are set directly link to the school's improvement priorities
 - has key members that are associated with specific aspects of improvement work. These governors are well informed and understand the strategies that are in place.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures meet requirements and are well organised. Recruitment is systematic and records are up to date. Staff know the most vulnerable pupils well and liaise effectively with external agencies to support them. Training is up to date and the school provides training for other schools in areas such as the 'Prevent' agenda.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers plan lessons which interest and enthuse pupils. The work in pupils' books often demonstrates that pupils respond well to the activities and work that is provided for them.
- The great majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils with respect to their behaviour, their attitudes to their work and the pace at which they work. In most lessons, pupils work hard and do not easily give up when things are difficult; they say that they enjoy a challenge and willingly work together to understand new concepts.
- Where teaching is not good, the evidence in pupils' books is clear that progress is too slow. This is the case in isolated parts of the school and leaders are aware that further support is needed to improve things.
- Teachers provide pupils with regular feedback about their work. Pupils in some classes make very good use of this to improve their work. In a small number of classes, pupils take too little notice of their teacher's advice and errors go uncorrected.
- Learning support assistants and teachers combine to tackle misconceptions and misunderstandings extremely well. Teachers assess the pupils' learning in mathematics by marking books at lunchtime and identifying those pupils who need additional help. These pupils are then targeted for support in the afternoon by learning support assistants who work with the pupil or group of pupils until they have grasped the skill or concept.
- This year, three teachers have been employed to directly support disadvantaged pupils in lessons. This is a departure from previous practice where the additional government funding that the school receives for this group of pupils was chiefly spent on interventions beyond the classroom. The school's assessment data are positive about the impact of the strategy as gaps are either narrowing or are already closed.
- The scrutiny of pupils' work reveals some very high-quality work, especially in English where pupils are learning to write very well, often from an early age. Mathematics and science work is also very good. Pupils enjoy their science because much of it is practical and exploratory; pupils ask very good questions and are required to think about their work. There are some gaps in teachers' subject knowledge in science, and some misconceptions, specifically around the teaching of animal classification and the evolutionary theory, are being allowed to continue.
- The quality of teaching in other subjects, and particularly geography, is mixed. Too little time is spent teaching geography for pupils to be adequately prepared for this subject in their secondary schools.
- The quality of the displays around the school is variable. In some classrooms and corridors, pupils' work is very well displayed and promotes high expectations and excellence. In contrast, some of the pupils' work that is displayed is done so with too little care. Some of the work is of a low quality and is presented without pride.

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 gain important skills for how to be a successful learner as they progress through the school. Many are very enthusiastic about their lessons and respond quickly to teachers' instructions. They use information technology well to assist with their learning where appropriate.
- Many pupils take up the extra-curricular and sporting opportunities offered by the school. A good number of pupils are passionate about their sports; this was clear when the cancellation of a football practice due to heavy rain was greeted by huge disappointment from pupils. Sporting opportunities offered to pupils who have special educational needs or disability are identifying some real talent in, for example, archery.
- Pupils enjoy the newly introduced philosophy lessons. These are providing pupils with an opportunity to think deeply about issues and to debate them. A lesson observed in Year 6 exemplified how thoughtful and reflective pupils are being in these lessons.
- The school's approach to eliminating bullying is robust. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take and are confident that adults would be able to help them if necessary. Pupils report that bullying is very rare – some say that neither they nor their friends have ever encountered it during their time at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils listen well and move to their work quickly. Little time is wasted in the great majority of classes. Lessons start promptly and proceed at a swift pace. Disruption to learning is rare; pupils say that the revised expectations of their behaviour, introduced in September 2015, have made a positive difference to behaviour as pupils move around the school and in the playgrounds.
- Where teaching is not yet good, the expectations of pupils are not high enough and the pace of their work is slower than in other parts of the school.
- The school's work to improve attendance has been very successful. Over the past two years, the rates of attendance have risen and are now better than the national average. Rates of persistent absence are also low. Pupils who are regularly absent are targeted for specific support.
- The proportions of pupils who are excluded on a fixed-term basis are lower than the national average for primary schools.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils start the school with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with age-related expectations. They make good progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics, reading and writing are above the national average.
- Pupils build on the good start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage during Years 1 and 2. A strong focus on developing reading skills is paying off. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected level in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check was well above the national average in 2015. Pupils currently in Year 1 are on track to achieve similarly high outcomes. Pupils make good use of their phonics skills to successfully read unfamiliar words. For example, a pupil in Year 2 correctly read the word 'retrievable' to an inspector, despite knowing neither the word nor what it meant.
- Attainment in Year 2 improved in 2015. Previously, standards in mathematics, reading and writing have been broadly average. Last year, however, standards in all of these subjects rose to be above the national average. This positive picture is set to be sustained this year.
- Pupils make steady progress in Key Stage 2. This accelerates in Year 6 when pupils are stretched and challenged to a much greater extent by the work that they receive. Pupils thrive under this challenge and many make extremely strong progress. Pupils in Year 6 left the school in 2015 with standards in reading and mathematics that were well above the national average. Standards in writing were also above average but to a lesser extent. These pupils, and those currently in Year 6, are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing. In 2015, this group of pupils made similar rates of progress to other pupils, but because their starting points were lower they left school with levels of attainment that were broadly one year behind other pupils. Interventions to support these pupils are in place across the school, and in most year groups the gaps are either narrowing or have closed altogether. In Year 6 this year, for example, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in mathematics has closed. This is of great importance as it means that disadvantaged pupils will embark on their secondary education on an equal footing with other pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are very well supported across the school. The leader in this area manages a large team of learning support assistants who provide the majority of the support for this group. The impact of their work is closely monitored and this supports the good progress that these pupils are making. In some cases, for example a pupil in Year 4, the progress made this year is exceptionally good because the teacher and learning support assistant have worked very effectively in combination to provide work that precisely meets the needs of the pupil.
- Pupils present their work well in many classes. Their pride and care is clearly apparent. In contrast, there are a small number of classes in which too little care is taken with the way that work is presented. Here, pupils' work is markedly different from the rest of the school and the quality of pupils' handwriting is not developing as quickly as it is elsewhere.
- The quality of pupils' work in the full range of subjects across the National Curriculum is variable. Some subjects, such as science, history and physical education, are taught well and pupils' outcomes are good. Pupils are also enthusiastic about these subjects and enjoy their lessons. The picture is not so positive with all other subjects. Although the full range is taught, the quality and quantity of work in, for example, geography is not as good as in other subjects. Art is very popular with pupils but they would like it to be taught more frequently.

Early years provision

is good

- Children are at the very centre of all of the school's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ethos permeates all of the activities and play that occur. Children make good progress. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception classes is above the national average.
- The assistant headteacher for the early years is an exceptionally good role model for other staff. Her current teaching commitments are limiting the impact that she has on all classes and groups. In those areas where her influence impacts all of the children, such as when all Reception children play and learn using a wide range of activities and resources, the quality of learning is very high. During those times when children are taught in their separate classes in Reception, the quality of teaching and learning is not as high but nonetheless remains good.
- Children's progress is carefully tracked. Teachers and learning support assistants make good use of assessment software to record and monitor the skills that children develop. They use this information to plan and tailor their teaching to meet the needs of the children.
- Parents are welcomed into the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are positive about the relationships between school and home, which often start with a home visit. The information that parents receive about their children is both detailed and individual.
- Children in the two- and three-year-old areas receive very good support and care. They learn alongside older children in a very positive and encouraging environment. Good use has been made of the available space and children thoroughly enjoy exploring and playing together. Speaking and language development are a priority for teaching staff and this is helping children to be more confident communicators with both adults and other children.
- As children move into Year 1, they continue to be monitored by the early years leader so that those who did not achieve a good level of development are supported to develop the key skills that they need to be successful learners as they move through the school. Children are well prepared for the changes in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	141877
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10009396

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	789
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Crawford
Headteacher	Anthony Peltier
Telephone number	01375 373866
Website	www.stiffordclaysprimary.thurrock.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@stiffordclaysprimary.thurrock.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups or have a first language believed to be other than English.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium grant is slightly below average. (The pupil premium grant provides additional funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is broadly average.
- The school met the current government floor targets in 2015. These express the minimum expectations for what pupils should achieve by the end of their time in the school.
- The school is part of the South West Essex Community Education Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and visited smaller groups of pupils in additional sessions.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors met with the Chair of Governors and two other governors. There were also meetings with a representative of the multi-academy trust.
- There were 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for inspectors to view. In addition, inspectors took account of a very detailed parental questionnaire issued just prior to the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors reviewed records provided by the school, including information about pupil progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Chris Moodie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Desmond Stubbs	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Heptinstall	Ofsted Inspector
Henry Weir	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, 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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

