

Stower Provost Community School

Woodville Stour Provost, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5LX

Inspection dates

6–7 December 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	Require 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

- Leaders have not monitored teaching and learning rigorously enough. Consequently, academic standards in reading, writing and mathematics have fallen and are now lower than should be expected throughout the school.
- Pupils' progress is not rapid enough for the majority to reach age-related expectations in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The most able pupils fall short of reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Assessment information is not used consistently well by teachers to guide their planning, so work is not set at the right level of challenge for all pupils.
- The professional development and training of staff, including teaching assistants, has been limited in scope and not monitored rigorously, so that it has had little impact on the quality of teaching.
- The teaching of phonics to children in the early years lacks sufficient pace, so they do not possess a secure basic knowledge of reading by the time they enter Year 1.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and the newly formed governing body have a clear vision for the school and an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors are holding the headteacher to account in a supportive and robust manner.
- The new headteacher has planned and set in train systems to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- The few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Most are on track to meet the standards expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are well behaved in class and at break and lunchtimes. They say that they enjoy school and appreciate the many extra-curricular activities on offer.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders monitor teaching and learning rigorously and give detailed guidance to teachers on how to improve their practice
 - making staff training and development a priority and monitoring outcomes closely.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school in order to increase pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - making best use of assessment information to guide teachers' planning so that work set is at the right level for all pupils
 - focusing on boys' engagement in lessons
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are fully challenged in all they do to produce work that is of a high standard, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that the teaching of phonics in the Reception Year is of a high quality and maintains sufficient pace so that children acquire a secure basic knowledge of reading by the time they enter Year 1.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not sustained pupils' good learning and achievement. They did not act quickly enough to tackle a slowing in rates of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils' attainment has fallen throughout the school.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning do not have a sharp enough focus on improving outcomes for all groups of pupils. Leaders do not monitor closely enough the quality of teaching or pupils' progress to identify those pupils who are not achieving as well as they should. This is particularly the case for more able pupils and boys. Teachers are now held more rigorously to account and are beginning to adapt their practice to ensure that pupils' progress improves at a quicker pace.
- In the short time the headteacher has been in post he has had a very positive influence in the school. With ongoing and timely support provided by the local authority and other external partners, the headteacher has introduced a school improvement plan that focuses on the right aspects to bring about the necessary improvements. He has begun to implement plans to improve provision and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve. The work on raising pupils' achievement began in earnest in September. Its impact, to date, is limited.
- Strategies to manage teachers' performance have also been implemented only recently. Targets are now set to hold teachers more rigorously to account. The impact of more rigorous accountability for teachers has yet to be fully realised.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school and welcome the changes being introduced by the headteacher. 'The school is a happy, warm-hearted school', wrote one parent; another said it is 'an extremely welcoming school with a friendly atmosphere and staff'.
- The headteacher has begun to carry out more regular checks on the quality of teaching within the school. Subject leaders have begun to attend local authority network meetings and training to keep up with new initiatives and to agree standards of pupils' work. Better-quality training to support teachers has helped them to understand the implications of the higher expectations of the national curriculum. However, professional development opportunities for teaching assistants are limited and this has hindered their effectiveness in providing support to teachers and pupils alike.
- The headteacher has established an effective working relationship with the governing body. He articulates a clear determination to make the school a success, and demonstrates this through an open, honest and collegiate style of leadership. Governors say that they have confidence in the headteacher's ability to lead the school and secure the improvements necessary to raise standards. The level of trust between governors and headteacher has strengthened.
- Leaders have identified pupils who have fallen behind in their learning. Teachers have begun to adapt their lesson plans to provide for pupils across the range of ability. They provide targeted, small-group teaching for those pupils who underachieved last year, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The specific areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed effectively. The outdoor provision for the youngest pupils in the

school has been improved considerably. Pupils are now able to take part in a stimulating range of activities and use resources outdoors that match the good quality of indoor provision.

- Teaching now ensures that pupils develop an awareness of modern British society through improved opportunities for them to develop their knowledge and understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity. The school's vision to ensure that 'together we grow' underpins the positive ethos and strong working relationships that pupils and staff enjoy. The school's work to promote fundamental British values has developed well since the previous inspection. Parents who completed the questionnaire 'Parent View' say they appreciate improvements to the taught curriculum that now ensure their children gain a better understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. An ambitious and well-planned programme of visits and visitors has strengthened the curriculum provision. For example, last year the whole school visited a science museum in Bristol; and assemblies are led by a regular visitor from the local church.
- The school also offers a wide array of extra-curricular activities to the children. These include a residential learning experience to an outdoor education centre, tag rugby, netball, tennis, football, swimming, 'kwik-cricket', sewing, gardening and street dance. These are extremely popular with pupils and very much appreciated by parents.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively for the few pupils in the school who qualify for this support. The sport premium has been used effectively to enrich the outdoor learning experiences of all pupils.
- **Governance of the school**
- The governing body has undergone significant re-organisation and change of membership in the past few months, with the majority of governors taking up their responsibilities in September. New governors have brought with them a wide range of expertise, experience and enthusiasm. As a result, the governing body is now in a much stronger position to provide strong, strategic leadership and hold the school effectively to account.
- Governors have gained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in the short time they have been in post. They have introduced their own action plan to complement that of the school. This clearly states how they intend to support the headteacher and provide effective leadership of the school through maintaining a cycle of regular, robust monitoring, support and challenge.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Systems to maintain and monitor safeguarding arrangements within the school are rigorous and carried out effectively. All staff are up to date with their training. They follow clear procedures should they ever have any cause for concern regarding the safety and welfare of pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and are taught about a range of potential risks, for example when using computers or social media. Older pupils showed that they are well aware of how to use online social networks safely, for example.
- The school's record-keeping system to keep pupils safe meets the statutory requirements, being up to date and administered thoroughly. School leaders comply with the requirements of safer recruitment and governors carefully monitor the school's

safeguarding work.

- Staff are trained appropriately to recognise the signs of radicalisation and prevent pupils from being radicalised or becoming susceptible to extremism. Teachers understand the importance of being vigilant at all times and what responsibilities they have to protect children from risk of harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching does not ensure consistently good outcomes for pupils. There is some good teaching across the school but it is too variable to secure pupils' good learning overall. This results in pupils making uneven progress and achieving standards below those of which they should be capable.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well to provide work which challenges pupils by building on what they already know, understand or can do. As a result, too few pupils make consistently good progress. This is particularly the case for the older pupils and the most able. For example, in 2016 no pupils achieved the higher levels expected in their end of year assessments in writing and mathematics.
- Teaching has not provided well enough for the learning needs of the wide ability range of pupils found in the mixed-age classes. This is because teachers' checks on pupils' learning are not carried out with sufficient rigour to accurately identify what pupils need to do to improve.
- The teaching of mathematics is not yet consistently good, with some weaknesses in subject knowledge. Some teachers do not know how to use recently purchased resources well enough to provide pupils with the practical experiences they need to consolidate their learning, make good progress and secure their mathematical knowledge. On occasion, teachers' questioning does not probe or deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently well. This hinders pupils' ability to problem-solve and they lack opportunities to apply their skills in a range of contexts. As one pupil who spoke to the inspector said, 'We keep on going over the same thing in the week in mathematics.' Other pupils also agreed that they 'find work mostly easy'.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are often not set high enough. For example, teachers too readily accept the first draft of a pupils' piece of written work. Older pupils and the most able in particular lack regular opportunities to hone their first drafts and think about how their writing can be refined or developed. As a result, no pupils achieved the higher standards in writing last year.
- There are some signs of improvements in teaching. Teachers have begun to plan together and this has led to a more creative approach to teaching. For example, earlier in the term the whole school took part in a week of activities to develop pupils' writing, based on the work of Roald Dahl; pupils produced good, often extended writing based on the book 'George's Marvellous Medicine'.
- The few pupils who have special educational needs are better provided for and most make good progress relative to their starting points.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils typically demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. They are considerate to one another and thoughtful. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said they enjoy coming to school. They especially appreciate the quiet, rural location of the school and the outdoor spaces that have been thoughtfully provided for pupils to enjoy.
- Pupils are gaining a good first-hand experience of what an eco-friendly environment their school is with its solar panels, a wind turbine and a biomass boiler on campus.
- Pupils say they always feel safe in school and indicate that bullying is rare. They are clear about sanctions and know who to speak to if they have a problem. Pupils say that all the adults in the school look after them well.
- The welfare, social and mental well-being of pupils is a priority. For example, some teaching assistants have been trained specifically to help promote pupils' acquisition of key social skills so that they might be better prepared to fully access all learning opportunities.
- An appropriate focus on 'e-safety' helps pupils to stay safe when using a computer or engaged with social media.
- School assemblies give pupils regular opportunities to reflect on their values and celebrate their achievements and those of others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are managed effectively by all members of staff. Any inappropriate behaviour is noted and effective strategies are employed to promote good behaviour once more.
- Pupils behave well at break and lunchtimes. All pupils benefit from a large and well-resourced outdoor play area. They are given plenty of resources to entertain themselves at play. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said they particularly like their swimming pool that they use in the summer and the more recent opportunity to learn about the outdoors through 'forest school' activities.
- Lunchtime supervision is supportive and effective. Adults integrate with pupils well to provide a safe and happy playtime for all pupils. At the end of playtimes pupils respond swiftly to instructions from adults and this ensures an effective transition back to classes.
- In lessons, pupils work well together. Those pupils who spoke to the inspector showed a secure understanding of the high expectations of behaviour set by adults and could explain how sanctions work should anyone misbehave.
- Representative members of the school council met with the inspector to share their views. They take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils can demonstrate a growing understanding of Britain as a multicultural society. They spoke about having termly 'British values days' and how they learn about different religions and cultures in their classes. 'Last year we celebrated Commonwealth Day and we were visited by a local Olympic Gold medallist,' reported one pupil.

- Pupils' attendance remains above the national average. Punctuality has greatly improved over the course of the past year due to effective strategies introduced by the headteacher to ensure that pupils arrive at school in good time.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was below national averages in writing and mathematics. This reflected their slow progress, with teaching not bringing about the rapid improvement needed to get them back on track to meet the expected academic standards.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 require improvement because of the low proportion of pupils, less than half the cohort, who reached the expected standard in writing. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in reading and mathematics was around national averages. No pupils exceeded expectations in any subject.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 require improvement. This is because few pupils made the expected progress in writing and mathematics in 2016. Outcomes for writing in 2016 were well below age-related expectations, with just a third of the group meeting the expected level. No more-able pupils achieved the higher levels. Results in grammar, punctuation and spelling were slightly better last year but still remain below national expectations. Results in mathematics were similarly concerning, with less than half the group reaching the expected standard. No pupils reached the higher standard in mathematics.
- There is a considerable gender gap within the school with boys, who outnumber girls two to one across the school, achieving poorly, especially in writing. Strategies to stimulate boys to write more and to a higher standard have not been effectively introduced, although teachers have made some changes to the content of subjects taught.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is better than in writing and mathematics. A selection of pupils from across the school read to the inspector with reasonable fluency. Younger pupils could apply their knowledge of phonics when attempting to read tricky words, such as 'everyone'. However, the teaching of phonics with the youngest pupils requires improvement as they have few opportunities to practise and deepen their knowledge of phonics. The school library is well stocked with appropriate reading materials to encourage pupils to read independently.
- Leaders keep a close check on pupils' personal, social and emotional development and provide for their needs well. For example, some pupils experience difficulties in engaging positively with their peers and with learning in lessons. They are being supported effectively by teaching assistants who have been appropriately trained to help pupils develop productive relationships with others and so make better progress in their learning.
- The few disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school are making better progress. In 2016 most achieved age-related expectations because they received better support in class and their additional needs were well met.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children have not made the progress that should be expected of them learning phonics in recent years, thus restricting their achievement in reading and writing. Consequently, they have not been well prepared to enter key stage 1.
- Leaders are acutely aware of the need to strengthen the quality of phonics teaching, with past weaknesses associated with a period of staffing instability. The quality of teaching this academic year is now typically good for Reception children, with more regular and accurate checks on children's learning and progress. Adults now clearly identify what each child needs to learn next in order to make good progress. Staff use the results of their assessments well to plan activities that children find both interesting and challenging at their own level. The activities cover all areas of learning each week, with an improved focus on developing children's language and reading development. The impact of this work has yet to be fully seen in children's outcomes.
- Children start school with skills and abilities that are typical for this age. Most children, including the few who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in most areas of learning during their Reception Year.
- Children settle quickly to learning and listen carefully to instructions. They play alongside each other well.
- Children learn in a well-resourced and spacious environment. Their well-being and safety in the Reception class is taken very seriously by all staff, who are vigilant and know how to report any concerns. This ensures that children's safety is not compromised.
- The much-improved outdoor learning environment means that children have access to exciting learning opportunities that are carefully planned. Teachers plan seasonal activities creatively and encourage children to deepen their knowledge and wonder of the world around them. For example, on a recent very frosty day, children were able to wrap up warmly and go outside to investigate the hoar-frost patterns; this in turn stimulated their work back in the classroom.
- Leaders have introduced new strategies to carefully analyse assessment information to check how children are progressing. Leaders have rightly identified that more attention needs to be given to children's writing. Strategies to improve this are at an early stage of development. The good use of practical resources to support children's development of early addition and subtraction skills means that they are making good progress in developing their mathematical understanding.

School details

Unique reference number	113674
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10019450

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Barrow
Headteacher	Martin Marshall
Telephone number	01747 838 370
Website	http://www.stowerprovost.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@stowerprovost.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Stower Provost Community School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Half of the pupils come from the nearby village and half come from outside the catchment area.
- The school is part of the Gillingham Area School's Partnership, a support network for local primary schools.
- There are twice as many boys as girls in the school. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined the previous inspection report, past and present pupils' performance data, school leaders' self-evaluation and the school's improvement plans.
- The inspector held discussions the headteacher, representatives of the governing body and the pupils' school council. The inspector also met with middle leaders and four teaching assistants, and held a telephone conversation with the local authority representative.
- A range of documentation was examined by the inspector concerning safeguarding and the recording of behaviour incidents.
- Visits to classrooms to observe teaching and learning were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard pupils read and scrutinised a variety of pupils' work in books, as well as on display throughout the school.
- The inspector took into account the views of 19 parents who responded to Parent View, and their written comments. He also considered responses to the staff and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Edwards, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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