

# Stapleford Primary School

Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 3NB

## Inspection dates

18–19 October 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Despite many considerable changes and challenges since the previous inspection, leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that Stapleford serves its local community and families well.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, they do not always focus and act on the most important priorities.
- Pupils' outcomes since the previous inspection have been largely above the national average. Progress of pupils currently in the school is good. However, progress in mathematics in key stage 2 still lags behind that in reading and writing.
- Pupils in key stage 1 typically reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who attain the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 is above the national average.
- Assessment procedures are still developing. Although leaders have systems in place to track pupils' progress and attainment, they do not use this information incisively enough.
- Teachers know the pupils in their classes well. However, learning in the mixed-aged class does not always challenge pupils to do the best they can, particularly the most able pupils.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers do not always tell pupils what they need to do next in their learning in mathematics.
- The curriculum is very well planned to motivate and engage pupils and broaden their horizons and ambitions. The many extra-curricular activities are very much appreciated and welcomed by pupils and parents alike.
- Pupils behave very well both inside and outside the classroom. They are polite, courteous and respectful of their classmates and adults.
- Leadership of the early years is good, and ensures that children get off to a flying start. Adults know the children and their families very well, often forming strong relationships with parents.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. The headteacher and his team have the confidence of parents and staff, who hold this village school with its caring ethos in high esteem.
- Pupils love coming to their 'fantastic, fun' school and are proud of their individual and collective achievements.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics by ensuring that:
  - pupils in key stage 2 make progress in mathematics that is similar to their progress in reading and writing
  - teachers use on-going assessment information to plan activities to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make the progress they should
  - teachers use the school's marking and feedback policy consistently so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work
  - the good practice that exists is shared across the school.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - through rigorous self-evaluation, leaders' plans for improvement focus on the most important priorities
  - leaders at all levels use assessment information incisively to highlight emerging areas for development
  - leaders regularly monitor the impact of the decisions they make on pupils' outcomes.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and governors are ambitious for the pupils and staff at Stapleford. Despite the many challenges that the school has faced in recent years, there is a palpable determination by all that the school will continue to improve. Staffing is now more stable, and leadership capacity, although in its early stages of development, is growing rapidly.
- Some leaders are new to their posts, and only 45% of staff were at this school at the time of the previous inspection. Leaders currently in the school have a developing understanding of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. However, they do not use this information as well as they might to focus on emerging priorities and quickly put in place actions to address them. As a result, leaders can become distracted and try to do too much at once.
- Leaders' monitoring of the impact of the decisions they make is not as rigorous as it needs to be. Through circumstances that sometimes are not of the school's making, there has been some slippage in the planned activities. As a consequence, leaders are sometimes unable to produce the evidence they need to show how effective their actions have been in raising pupils' achievement. For example, it is evident that progress in mathematics is not consistently good across the school, and particularly throughout key stage 2. This area of the school's work has not been given the priority it should.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The school is held in high regard by the vast majority of parents, a considerable number of whom made their views known to the inspector by text. One parent commented, 'I feel my son is in the best school to meet his needs. The school is aware of his limitations and works around this when managing his educational or personal needs.' Several success stories like this were evidenced during the inspection.
- The school prepares its pupils particularly well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught about, for example, how different religions are celebrated, how some people are less fortunate than others, and how important it is to listen to and debate 'the big questions' that help us to respect others and their views. This is well demonstrated by the influence the school council has on decision-making, from decisions on recycling to how to improve safety and learning in the school.
- The curriculum is well developed across the school. Pupils are offered a broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on sport and the creative arts. Leaders have a good understanding of how children and pupils learn at this stage of their education. The development of relevant and exciting themes is key to the pupils' enthusiasm to learn. They use their English and mathematics skills in science, geography, history and religious education. Teachers think creatively, for example in history. Beautifully crafted models of Viking houses and boats show that pupils' skills in design and technology are developing well alongside their appreciation of how the Vikings fit into English history. Displays of pupils' artwork adorn the walls, exploring, for example, different artists and techniques.

- Reading is taught well across the school. Teachers have a good understanding of how to teach early reading skills and phonics awareness, particularly in the early years and key stage 1. The English subject leader is aware that, because of a legacy of variable teaching, some pupils in key stage 2 are not secure in their reading skills. She is supporting those pupils well to ensure that gaps are filled and teachers are able to teach to meet pupils' needs. Having said that, it is evident on speaking to pupils that all ages really enjoy reading. 'It takes you to a place that you may not otherwise have gone', said one pupil. The well-developed library area is a place pupils like to come to choose their next book. They also share, on a display for all to see, why they like reading.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. Leadership of this area of the school's work is relatively new. However, it is clear from evidence seen in the classroom, in books and on speaking to pupils that these pupils are making at least expected progress, and many very strong progress. This is because teachers know their pupils well, ensure teaching assistants effectively support pupils in their learning, and track pupils' achievements. As the headteacher said, 'If an intervention doesn't work, we change it!'
- There are few disadvantaged pupils in the school. However, pupil premium funding is used wisely by leaders to support the needs of this group of pupils. Leaders have very effectively identified the barriers to learning experienced by each individual pupil, and employed experienced additional staff who have the expertise needed to provide both academic and pastoral support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently in the school achieve at a broadly similar rate to, and sometimes better than, their classmates.
- Leaders and governors are very pleased with the way that they spend the additional physical education and sport premium funding. The sports coach is a well-respected member of the school's team, who provides pupils with a wide range of experiences and enhances their skills. Support to ensure that teachers' development in this area of the curriculum is enhanced is evident, making the use of the funding more sustainable. As a result, physical education and sport is delivered well. Pupils have access to a growing repertoire of sporting enrichment activities and take part in competitions locally and further afield. The school is rightly proud of its success in competitive sports against pupils in other schools.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is particularly well developed. The school celebrates pupils' individual and collective successes well in sharing assemblies, rewarding pupils, for example, for demonstrating the school's core values. Pupils have a good understanding of the part that they play in their small school community. They readily help one another, for example as play leaders, and are proud to be a part of the school. This does not happen by chance. It happens because it is 'lived' by staff, leaders and governors who are committed to Stapleford and the local community.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance at Stapleford is effective. The school has faced many challenges in recent years. Despite this, the longstanding chair and the team of governors, some of whom are relatively new to their role, remain resolutely committed to further improving the school. The governing body has a growing and wide range of expertise, which enables

it to provide informed support and advice to school leaders. Governors do this readily, visiting the school and meeting with members of staff and pupils regularly.

- Governors are keen to reflect on their own effectiveness in supporting and holding leaders to account. They wisely enlist support from outside the school where they feel it will benefit the staff and pupils. They acknowledge that the work of the leaders in a small school is considerable. However, they recognise that they and leaders may not have always worked as smartly as they might. As a result, governors' time has not always been spent in the most efficient way. Identifying the key priorities, acting on them and evaluating their impact have not always been as effective as they could be.
- Governors ensure that systems are in place to manage the performance of the headteacher. They seek advice from their improvement partner to ensure that the process supports whole-school improvement effectively. Governors say that the inspection process will undoubtedly inform future school improvement priorities and hone the process further.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the effective use of pupil and sport premium funding, and additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors track closely the impact of the support that these groups of pupils receive, through the headteacher's termly report to governors.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and procedures followed. The headteacher and chair of governors have undertaken training for safer recruitment. Rigorous statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- Leaders have established a positive culture that promotes the importance of the safety and well-being of pupils and children. Appropriate training ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding, and 'Prevent' training has been provided for staff. As a result, all adults are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face.
- Records are kept in good order. Leaders effectively share information with parents and the appropriate external agencies. This ensures pupils' safety and provides the support that individual children, pupils and families need.
- The school council has been instrumental in ensuring that the profile of internet safety is raised. As a result, pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Older pupils in the school take part in 'Bikeability' so that they are well prepared for riding their bikes on the village's roads.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Support and training ensure that the teaching of reading and writing, in particular, is effective. The teaching of mathematics is becoming increasingly effective, particularly in key stage 1. However, leaders acknowledge that some pupils in key stage 2 do not make the progress they should.
- Despite there being considerable barriers to securing good-quality teachers locally,

those seen during the inspection know their pupils well. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a consequence, pupils pay attention in lessons and quickly settle to the work that teachers have set for them. Work in English is well planned and meets the needs of the majority of pupils. Leaders accept, however, that not all teachers challenge the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics.

- Leaders are beginning to develop systems that identify gaps in pupils' learning which have emerged as a result of the legacy of weaker teaching, or where classes of pupils have had a number of teachers. These gaps are being tackled effectively through support and good-quality teaching. However, in key stage 2, progress is slower. This is partly because there is not yet a solid understanding of appropriately challenging work for each year group within the mixed-age classes. This particularly impacts on the most able pupils and mostly in mathematics.
- Teachers use a range of resources and equipment to support pupils' learning well, particularly in key stage 1 and the early years. Most adults model strategies to support pupils' learning effectively, some asking searching questions to make pupils think hard about their learning. Pupils are encouraged to investigate their own methods when solving problems in mathematics or carrying out science experiments. For example, when pupils were making circuits, they had to think carefully about what they already knew in this area and what they thought they might find out, and then record what they did actually find out. Pupils say they like this sort of problem-solving challenge.
- The school's new marking and feedback policy is being used by the majority of staff. Some work in pupils' books shows that pupils are also using the school's purple pen improvement strategy. However, this is not yet used by all staff. It is also used more effectively in English than it is in mathematics. For example, comments seen in some English books not only acknowledge good use of adverbs, but also challenge pupils to think about short sentences for impact. However, in mathematics, adults' responses to pupils' work are usually congratulatory or simply confirming that pupils have achieved the lesson's learning objective.
- Assessment of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics is still at an early stage of development. However, the thematic curriculum is well planned and delivered on a two-year cycle. Leaders have therefore ensured that there is progression and that teachers are planning work that enables pupils' knowledge and skills to develop appropriately.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Almost all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey would recommend the school to others. As one said, 'The whole school has a wonderful feeling of being one big family while ensuring that all the children's needs are met.'
- Pupils are proud of their 'brilliant, fun and enjoyable' school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection and those who completed the online survey said how well cared for and safe they feel. They know about keeping themselves safe when, for example, using the

internet, and use the acronym 'THINK' to help them remember what to do if they feel unsafe. Older pupils also learn how to keep themselves safe when riding their bikes in the village.

- The school's values are visible throughout the school. Celebration of pupils who 'live the values' adorn the walls. 'Random acts of kindness' are regularly rewarded. One such instance was when one pupil, whose turn it was to ring the school bell, let another pupil do it because she had fallen over and hurt herself. Discussions during philosophy sessions undoubtedly support pupils' development of, for example, friendship and what it means to be a good friend. 'Someone who is kind, fun and trustful' was one pupil's description.
- Leaders are keen to celebrate all pupils' achievements. Pupils and parents say they like the 'Marvellous Me' system of rewarding such achievements as being 'star of the week' or receiving the headteacher's award. One pupil who had received a 'Marvellous Me', said, 'I was so proud, and so was my mum, that I had got this so early in the new term.'
- Pupils know that bullying is 'where someone is mean regularly'. They are clear that there is little if any bullying and no racism in the school. They are equally clear that they know who to go to if they are worried about anything.
- Almost all parents who responded by text to Parent View are full of praise for the way in which their children are supported and cared for. Positive comments were numerous: 'Our sons are happy and feel loved and supported' at Stapleford; 'The fantastic team at the school make sure that the children are happy and that they achieve their best in a holistic and well-rounded way'; 'I personally love this school and wouldn't want my son to go anywhere else.'
- Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that attendance is as good as it can be. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the vast majority attend regularly and punctually. They know that they 'come to school to learn' and that it is important to do so. There are still a small number of families whose children do not attend as regularly as they should.
- Some 15% of parents take up the option of their children coming to the well-run breakfast club. It was a delight to watch pupils start their day with such an array of healthy food and drink, and to sit calmly with their friends enjoying the 'occasion'. One very young boy told the inspector, 'I like to come to breakfast club because I get to choose my own food, like brioche!'

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very polite and courteous to their classmates and adults, including visitors. The respect that pupils showed to a local member of the community who came in to talk to them about his evacuation experience in World War 2 was impressive. The pupils were clearly touched by his personal recollections and they asked some searching questions. 'Were you afraid when you heard the planes?' asked one pupil.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, in and around the school, and on the playground. They enjoy playing cooperatively and also in competition with each other. The playground at

lunchtimes is clearly a place where the pupils enjoy indulging in a multitude of different activities, all well organised by the school's sports coach.

- The school's positive behaviour system is understood well by pupils. They say there is very little poor behaviour in the school. They know the consequences of poor behaviour and, as a result of that and consistent positive behaviour management by all adults, there are very few incidents.
- Pupils know the importance of learning. The vast majority are eager to please their teachers and willingly do what is asked of them. Most demonstrate good attitudes to learning, whether when guided or when working independently, even the very youngest children in the school.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and teachers have worked hard to ensure good levels of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, almost all outcomes have been above the national average.
- Pupils acquire phonics knowledge well and make good progress in their reading skills from their initial starting points. The provisional results in 2017 indicate that achievement in phonics will be, once again, above the national average.
- The 2017 cohort of pupils in Year 2 achieved well, continuing to be above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils made strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics from the start of their time in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth also appears to be above the national average.
- Until 2017, pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in combined reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6, in 2017, was below the national average. This small cohort achieved well in attainment and progress in reading and writing. They did not, however, make the progress that was expected in mathematics. Two or three pupils were very close to achieving what they were expected to but did not do so on the day of the tests.
- The school's own assessment information and the work in pupils' books show that good progress is made in reading and writing across the school. However, there is still a way to go for some pupils to achieve as well as they should, particularly in key stage 2 in mathematics. Teachers are working hard to address a legacy of inconsistent teaching so that pupils' progress in mathematics accelerates. Leaders are aware that progress, particularly for the most able pupils, must be consistently strong in order for them to achieve above the expected standard by the time they leave the school.
- The relatively small group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very well assisted by staff, who have received training in order to support pupils' individual needs. As a result, this group of pupils is making good progress from their individual starting points.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 to comment on their achievement. However, good use is made of pupil premium funding so that pupils across the school make good progress from their varying starting points in



reading, writing and mathematics.

- Work in pupils' books in subjects like religious education, history and science shows that pupils have a number of opportunities to practise their basic English and mathematics skills across the curriculum. For example, problem-solving, producing timelines and designing and conducting science experiments all show that teachers take every opportunity to build on pupils' existing knowledge and skills.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years unit has grown in recent years, incorporating the previously privately-run pre-school. Although relatively recent to the role, the leader of the early years provides effective leadership. She and her experienced and able team have made significant improvements to the early years provision. The result is a bright, stimulating environment for children to learn in.
- The majority of children enter the Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. Very few children join the Reception class from settings other than the school's Nursery class.
- The leader of the early years has worked hard to create a highly organised team. Each member of the team knows the children's individual needs well and what support each child needs to take their learning forward. As a result of this precise assessment, information-sharing and high-quality teaching, children make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The environment is rich with language and opportunities for children to test out their speaking and listening, as well as early reading, writing and number skills. Children confidently talked with the inspector about what they were doing. Some children, for example, were busily making samosas as part of the celebration of Diwali. 'Mushing potatoes' and stirring in peas, one child told the inspector that she prefers potatoes 'because you usually get beef and gravy with potatoes'.
- Children are keen to learn, as activities are fun and engaging and capture their imaginations. The inspector observed children making Rangoli patterns with coloured rice, taking real care to try to copy the drawings that the teacher gave them as examples. What is more, children could tell the inspector the significance of these patterns: 'Indian people hang patterns like this up at their doors to welcome people', said one four-year-old.
- Children are encouraged to be independent learners as soon as they start school. They register themselves for their choice of school dinner, for example by placing their photographs on a chart. Adults model areas of learning very effectively, and children follow their good example. A group of children running the 'café' confidently took the teacher's food and drink order. 'We don't have any coke. We only have lemonade', said one boy.
- All adults are skilled at talking with children about what they are doing. 'Remember the rules about where to stand when you throw', said the early years practitioner to a three-year-old who was practising throwing bean bags into a bucket. His determination and her gentle encouragement were a joy to watch.
- The early years leader places great importance on developing effective partnerships

with parents. From home visits to celebrating children's home learning in school, she and her team take every opportunity to share information about individual children's needs and achievements. Parents are full of praise for the staff in the early years.

- Safeguarding and welfare practices in the early years classes are very effective. Children are taught how to keep themselves safe from a very early age. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.

## School details

Unique reference number	117455
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10036210

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Critchley
Headteacher	James Shillito
Telephone number	01992 583341
Website	<a href="http://www.stapleford.herts.sch.uk/">www.stapleford.herts.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@stapleford.herts.sch.uk">head@stapleford.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12–13 June 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This Christian faith school is smaller than the average primary school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. There are two further classes in the early years. One accommodates Nursery- and Reception-age children. The other class is for the school's rising three-year-old children who attend school in the mornings only.
- The majority of pupils and children in the school are White British. None speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who have a

statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum set by the government.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the early years leader and the leader of key stage 1. The inspector also held meetings with a group of randomly selected pupils and four members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone with the school's improvement partner and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The inspector observed learning in 16 lessons, or parts of lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- The headteacher and inspector looked in detail at a range of pupils' work in different subjects in their books from this year and the last academic year. The inspector heard some pupils read and spoke with pupils throughout the inspection about their learning.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's checks on the suitability of adults to work with children, and other documentation regarding safeguarding. The headteacher made available the school's own self-evaluation document and development plan, subject leaders' action plans, minutes of governing body meetings, and documentation regarding child protection.
- The inspector took into consideration the responses to the online questionnaire of 11 staff and 41 pupils, and the views of 47 parents who responded to Parent View, or by text message.

## Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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