

Stoke Mandeville Combined School

Lower Road, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 5XA

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2018

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, along with other key leaders, has brought about rapid improvements to the standard of education at the school. All staff work together towards a shared vision. The quality of teaching is good. Consequently, current pupils are now making good progress.
- Governance at the school is effective. Governors hold leaders to account diligently for how well pupils are doing and how quickly the school is improving.
- Some leaders are new to post or developing in their roles. Consequently, some improvements are not yet established and need more time to embed.
- The focus on improving teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics has ensured that many more pupils are now better prepared for the next stage of their education, particularly in the early years and key stage 1.
- Teachers are effective in their roles. They ensure that lessons are typically interesting, well organised, calm and purposeful, including in the additional resource unit for pupils who have hearing impairment. Pupils enjoy lessons, and learn well and with enthusiasm.
- Staff at the school make sure pupils are safe. They undertake their responsibilities well to ensure that concerns are acted upon properly.
- Behaviour is almost always good and sometimes better. Pupils enjoy school and attend well. They show excellent attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted well. There is a strong sense of community at the school. Pupils contribute to the positive atmosphere by looking out for each other and acting responsibly.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils experience an effective, interesting and varied curriculum. Trips and visits enhance pupils' learning. Opportunities for pupils to apply their learning across subjects are plentiful.
- Children make a flying start in their Reception year. Leaders ensure that provision is planned carefully to meet children's needs. Children learn well during adult-led and child-initiated lessons.
- Some pupils, including the most able, are not yet achieving as much as they could in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Parents rightly have renewed confidence in leaders. They recognise the school is improving, that pupils' behaviour is managed well and that their children are safe at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for the most able
 - sharing the best practice to secure high-quality questioning by all teachers and teaching assistants.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by teaching them how the most successful learners contribute more to their own progress.
- Sustain the better progress being made by current pupils to ensure their attainment and progress are consistently above average and a greater proportion of pupils achieve a greater depth in their learning.
- Build on improvements to leadership and management so that evaluations are rigorous and based on a dispassionate view of the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads with passion, alacrity and determination. She has driven improvement in the school, while navigating a number of challenges successfully. As a result, the school is in a much better place than at the time of the last inspection.
- There is now an established senior leadership team. Together with governors, the team has established an aspirational vision for the future which is shared among staff. Consequently, all staff are now pulling in the same direction to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Senior leaders' monitoring of the school is rigorous and effective. Leaders check the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility carefully, including in the additional resource provision for pupils who have hearing impairment. New systems to track the progress pupils make are being used to check what is going well and where extra focus is needed. This helps ensure that leaders' evaluations of the effectiveness of the school are broadly accurate and useful in planning further improvements. However, at times, leaders are overly optimistic about the progress they have made at the school. This is because they do not take a dispassionate view of the school compared with others nationally.
- The performance management of teachers is robust and has helped bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. There is an appropriate link between the performance of staff and their pay. The headteacher ensures that teachers are held to account robustly to improve the progress pupils are making. Weak performance is challenged appropriately and with rigour.
- Some subject leaders are very effective and demonstrate the skills needed to lead improvements in their areas of responsibility. For example, the leadership of English is particularly effective. However, some leaders are newer to post or are still developing their leadership skills. Consequently, as leaders recognise, there is more work to do until all leaders are as effective as the best.
- The curriculum at the school is varied and deep, and captures pupils' imagination well. For example, pupils report very positively about trips and visits, such as to Windsor Castle, and how these help them to learn across subjects. Opportunities to develop pupils' self-awareness and self-esteem are very well developed.
- Pupils rightly report positively on the strong sense of community at the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for well. They understand and learn to value other people's differences, including other faiths, beliefs and abilities. Pupils are included and valued by staff and this helps pupils to understand that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and that there should be equality of opportunity for all. Consequently, British values are promoted well.
- School leaders have made very good use of excellent support provided by Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT). Bespoke packages of support, including from a local teaching school, helped to improve the effectiveness of senior and middle leadership. As a result of the rapid improvements that have been made, particularly over the last year, BLT has rightly reduced the level of support as school leaders have

shown the increasing capacity to drive rapid improvements for themselves.

Governance of the school

- The governing body provides robust challenge and support to leaders. It ensures that changes to leadership are focused on improving effectiveness, particularly in how well pupils do at the school. As well as keeping a keen eye on how the school is improving, governors have looked at ways to strengthen their own effectiveness. The chair of governors has brought about much greater efficiency to how the governors monitor the school. Governors' effectiveness in holding leaders to account ensures the school is very well placed to improve in the future.
- Governors receive useful information from school leaders on how well teaching supports learning. They follow this up effectively by regularly visiting the school. The sharing of responsibilities among governors has ensured that all aspects of the school are carefully reviewed. Where weaknesses appear, governors ask astute and challenging questions of leaders, which leads to useful action, when necessary.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust. For example, the implementation of child protection processes has been led effectively and so works well. Staff receive appropriate training, including that completed by the designated and deputy designated safeguarding leads.
- School leaders work effectively with other agencies to protect children. They are tenacious in following up concerns when necessary. Records are kept diligently. Safer recruitment is taken very seriously and all checks are completed in a timely and appropriate manner. The single central record is maintained meticulously and this is monitored well by the school administrator and checked carefully by the headteacher.
- The strong community at the school also ensures that there is an open and caring culture. Pupils report they know whom to go to if they are concerned about anything and that they would be taken seriously. They also rightly believe that school staff would take effective action to support them, should the need arise, and that issues with bullying are dealt with appropriately. Very effective work, driven through the school travel plan, ensures children learn how to keep themselves safe in their own community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good across the school, including in the additional resource provision for pupils who have hearing impairment. Pupils achieve well because they find lessons increasingly engaging and challenging.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is consistently strong. Teachers impart this knowledge using a range of interesting and well-planned lessons that capture pupils' interests well. Teachers enjoy excellent relationships with pupils. This helps to ensure that lessons are purposeful, calm and effective.

- Teachers make effective use of assessment, particularly when planning lessons. They consider carefully how to challenge pupils and what is needed to allow pupils to build on what they already know or can do. This means work is well matched to the different needs of pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work effectively. Teachers' feedback ensures that pupils improve their work. Leaders have rightly identified the need to continue to refine this so that pupils can identify how to improve their work with greater independence. This is because pupils rely on the guidance of teachers and the structure of lessons to secure improvements to their work. Pupils have not developed the ability to identify where improvements can be made as independently as they could, particularly with their writing.
- The teaching of reading and writing is good. Leaders have taken useful action to improve how teachers engage pupils' interest in reading and show the techniques of writing with gusto. Phonics teaching is very effective. Pupils report that English lessons are increasingly interesting and challenging. Many feel that the focus on high-quality texts and making links across the curriculum are helping them to enjoy their learning more and make better progress. For example, Year 5 pupils reported very positively about the impact of studying the text 'Viking Boy' in their English lessons. Consequently, current pupils' progress in writing is helping pupils to catch up much more readily to where they should be.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because lessons allow pupils to build on what they can already do. Pupils benefit from studying a range of mathematical concepts and regular opportunities to apply them across the curriculum. Work in books demonstrates that pupils get good opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills through a range of open-ended investigations.
- The impact of teaching on achievement can be clearly seen in pupils' books and in the good progress being made by current pupils. Teaching has not yet secured the rapid and sustained progress across all year groups required to be judged outstanding.
- Teaching assistants often add value to pupils' learning. However, there are occasions when the quality of support offered by teaching assistants limits the progress of pupils.
- Teachers' use of questioning varies. Teachers who use questioning most effectively probe and challenge pupils' responses consistently. This helps pupils to deepen and broaden their understanding and make much stronger progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum has a number of elements that promote pupils' self-confidence and physical and mental well-being effectively.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying and believe that there is no use of discriminatory language at the school. Pupils believe that bullying is exceptionally rare at the school and this is reflected in the logs kept and analysed by inspectors. On the very occasional times there have been issues, the school has

responded swiftly and effectively.

- Pupils develop positive attitudes about healthy lifestyles. Leaders have prioritised access to regular, high-quality physical education for all pupils. Sporting achievements are celebrated and valued by the staff at the school. This helps to ensure that pupils feel the same. They enjoy physical education lessons and the sporting clubs that are on offer to them.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at the school, and parents and carers overwhelmingly share the same view. Leaders have driven a number of initiatives that help pupils develop a strong sense of what they need to do to stay safe. For example, work on the school travel plan has ensured that pupils learn different ways to travel to school safely. Pupils talk with confidence about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils attend well. This is reflected in above-average attendance at the school over the last two years. Current attendance data shows a recent decline in the school's own high standards. However, leaders take effective action when responding to issues of poor attendance. For example, leaders work closely with individual families to encourage better attendance and improved experiences at school. When necessary, leaders work effectively with other agencies and take robust action.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show strong attitudes towards learning in lessons. They demonstrate resilience when activities are challenging, and respond well to the feedback they receive from teachers and teaching assistants during lessons.
- Pupils behave positively in and around school. They play and learn cooperatively. Inspectors observed disagreements being successfully resolved by pupils without the need for adult intervention, reflecting how well positive relationships are promoted.
- Pupils, parents and staff rightly agree that pupils' behaviour is good and well managed. At times, a small minority of pupils still rely heavily on the guidance they are given by adults in lessons and are not as well informed about what makes a successful learner as they might be.
- Staff at the school know each individual very well. Strong relationships permeate between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Consequently, there is a strong sense of community at the school, where every individual feels valued. Pupils strive to be, and are, a credit to the school and their families.
- There have been no exclusions at the school for the last three years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils make good progress from their different starting points in all three key stages at the school. In some cases, pupils have made very strong progress in a very short amount of time because of effective initiatives employed by the current senior leadership team. Consequently, pupils' attainment is consistently improving in all three key stages. Children attain above-average results in early years, as do pupils in key stage 1, and average results by the end of key stage 2. This is a significant

improvement since the time of the last inspection.

- The proportion of children who left Reception in 2017 with a good level of development was above the national average. Current assessment information, supported by the observations of inspectors, shows that the current Reception cohort is on track to achieve even better. Children leave Reception very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children make excellent progress in phonics lessons in Reception, as do pupils in key stage 1. By the end of Year 1, pupils' results in the phonics screening check are well above the national average. Pupils' achievement in phonics is clearly evident in how they apply their skills when reading or writing.
- By the time pupils finish key stage 1, their attainment is better than that seen typically. However, the proportions achieving a greater depth of understanding are not as high as they should be. This is because, overall, pupils make good progress during Years 1 and 2, but too few of the most able are challenged well enough to reach their potential.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2 is broadly average. Standards have been consistently improving over the last three years. Pupils also achieve age-related standards in a range of subjects, for example in art, physical education and history. Pupils are, therefore, well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' progress during key stage 2 has been varied in the past and weak in writing. Pupils have not always attained as well as they should have. However, pupils' current achievement is much better. For example, the school's own data about the current Year 6 demonstrates that pupils are on track to make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress, including those who attend the additional resource provision for pupils who have hearing impairment. Leaders know and analyse the needs of these pupils well. Leaders work effectively with parents to ensure that there are strong links between what happens at school and at home. This makes sure pupils' needs are catered for effectively.
- Key stage 2 results in 2016 and 2017 demonstrate that too few of the most able pupils achieved their potential. Leaders rightly recognise that most-able pupils are not challenged consistently enough in lessons and over time.
- Cohorts are small at the school, with the proportions who are eligible for pupil premium funding in some cohorts being very small. Consequently, assessment information about disadvantaged pupils as a group is unreliable. However, pupils at the school who benefit from the grant make similar progress to their peers and sometimes better. As with other groups in the school, disadvantaged pupils' progress from their starting points is good.

Early years provision

Good

- Provision in early years has improved and has many strengths. Children benefit from enticing and stimulating activities that support their development in all areas of the early years curriculum.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders have ensured that, through their evaluations and strong use of assessment, they have improved how provision meets the varying needs of the children who learn there. This is because they carry out a similar approach to monitoring as seen in the rest of the school. Leaders, therefore, have a good understanding of the effectiveness of provision in early years and have prepared well-targeted plans for improvement. Leaders ensure that the children are safe.
- Leaders have adapted provision in early years effectively. Work in children's journals and their achievement in lessons show that they make good progress from their starting points. Current school data indicates that more children are on track to reach a good level of development in 2018.
- There are very effective links between staff and parents. Parents report very positively about the changes made for children when they transition from pre-school into Reception. Parents make regular contributions to the school's information about how well their children are doing. Parents appreciate the open and welcoming environment that leaders have created.
- Children take part in purposeful and engaging activities, including when having more choice about what they are learning. Teachers make good use of questioning to challenge children's thinking and deepen their understanding. However, some staff are less adept at using questions to utilise learning opportunities during play. Consequently, children make good progress in early years, but could do even better if questioning were used consistently.
- Teachers' assessments are used appropriately to build up a strong picture of how well children are doing. However, assessments made are not always linked well enough to the area of learning to which they relate. This means staff do not always adapt provision quickly enough to allow the children to make even more rapid progress.
- The teaching of phonics is a particular strength in early years. Children are taught precisely what sounds letters represent. As a result, children's writing can be easily read by others and the children are able to write at length.

School details

Unique reference number	110249
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10040915

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

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Marcus Rogers
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Stewart
Telephone number	01296 612371
Website	www.stokemandeville.eschools.co.uk
Email address	office@stokemandeville.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 February 2016

Information about this school

- Stoke Mandeville Combined School is smaller than the average-sized primary school, with one-form entry.
- The school has an additional resource for pupils and children who have hearing impairment. There are currently six 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 their learning in the additional resource base.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staffing changes, including new leaders for key stage 1 and for key stage 2, as well as early years. The new leader of key stage 2 is also a lead practitioner in the teaching of English. A new chair of the governing body took up post in January 2017.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is significantly below the national average.
- 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 SEN and/or disabilities 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 15 lessons across the school, the majority jointly with a senior leader. They observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons. Inspectors analysed records of pupils' achievement, talked with a group of pupils and listened to pupils read from Years 2, 4 and 6. They scrutinised information about pupils' attendance.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, leaders responsible for SEN and the early years, as well as with a group of governors. The lead inspector spoke to a representative from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, which provides support services to schools on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at school documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan, and assessment information about pupils' achievement.
- The inspector took account of 83 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clare Morgan

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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