

Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Summer Lane, Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 0JP

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

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

- Leaders have acted with determination and skill to bring about improvements to all aspects of the school. Teaching is consistently good. Pupils now achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Subject leaders in English and mathematics fulfil their roles admirably. They have brought about teaching that provides challenge for all pupils, including the most able.
- Governors are clear about the strategic direction of the school. They sustain a focus on checking that improvements lead to pupils' good progress.
- Leaders closely oversee the use of the pupil premium. Leaders use it successfully to help disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Their parents and carers appreciate the school's skilled support for their children's learning and welfare.
- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. They set tasks which are challenging but well matched to pupils' abilities. They check that all pupils understand the learning.
- Children in the early years make good progress across the curriculum. They gain confidence and independence by exploring outdoors to learn about the natural world.
- Pupils behave well. The school is a safe, friendly and encouraging place to learn.
- All aspects of reading, including phonics skills, are taught well. Teachers broaden pupils' personal reading by introducing them to a wide range of literature.
- Teachers develop pupils' writing across a range of subjects. However, there are occasions when teachers do not insist that pupils write accurately. Pupils repeat spelling errors or do not maintain good standards of handwriting.
- Pupils work enthusiastically in mathematics and develop good problem-solving skills. On occasions, pupils do not set out their work or explain their thinking as clearly as they could.
- Leaders hold a wealth of information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, their evaluations are not sufficiently sharp to identify fully where improvements could still take place.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the quality of leaders' evaluations so that they hold a more precise picture of where teaching and pupils' progress could improve further.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - insist on accuracy in pupils' writing, particularly their spelling and handwriting
 - develop pupils' ability to set out their mathematics systematically and explain their thinking clearly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has provided skilled leadership and has enabled other leaders to develop in their strategic roles. Leaders have approached the improvement of the school in a determined and effective way. There is now stability of leadership and staffing in the school. Staff are highly positive about the drive for improvement and have committed to it wholeheartedly and effectively.
- Senior leaders have developed sound plans for the school's improvement. These are based on priorities identified by the previous inspection and gleaned through consideration of pupils' outcomes in national assessments. The actions they have taken have brought about consistently good teaching. Across the school, pupils now achieve well.
- Senior leaders visit classes frequently to make checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They report on what is going well and what could be further improved. However, they do not evaluate the series of observations well enough to identify if all advice has been put into practice. Similarly, although pupils are making good progress, leaders have not identified sharply where progress could be even better.
- Subject leaders in mathematics and English are effective in their roles. They are knowledgeable about their subjects and have developed good teaching across the school. They regularly check on the quality of pupils' work and give precise and useful information to teachers on how to improve their practice.
- The curriculum is relevant to pupils and well planned. The school's chosen topics develop pupils' understanding well across a range of subjects. The teachers' deep planning of the curriculum in mathematics and English has contributed significantly to pupils' progress, which is now good.
- The school is an inclusive community. Leaders use funding particularly effectively to promote the progress of pupils with SEND. The pupil premium is well planned and used. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils achieve well, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school's Christian foundation provides the structure for the teaching of respect and compassion. Pupils write to pupils in Kenya to widen their perspective on the lives of children across the world. They learn about fundamental values of democracy by electing class and school councillors.
- The school involves parents well, particularly as so many of the pupils arrive at the school on buses. Despite the broad catchment of the school, parents remark on its 'family feel' and strong sense of community.
- The sport premium is used wisely and enables pupils to take part in local competitions. Staff develop their skills in teaching sport by working alongside specialist coaches. The school provides exciting opportunities for pupils to try new sports. For instance, the older pupils experience sailing.

Governance of the school

- Governors have developed considerably in their roles. They now provide leaders with the necessary challenge to ensure that improvements to the school are sustained. The governing body has benefited from training to strengthen its use of information about pupils' achievement. Governors now seek assurances from leaders that actions taken to develop the school improve pupils' progress.
- Minutes of governors' meetings show that governors check the progress of the school's plans for improvement carefully. Minutes indicate that, increasingly, all governors are taking a full part in monitoring the work of the school.
- Governors are skilled at using the budget well to meet the school's priorities. They recognise the challenge leaders face with fluctuating numbers of pupils in different year groups, particularly those containing a high proportion of pupils with SEND. Consequently, governors work closely with staff to ensure that resources are used effectively to promote the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff share a clear understanding of the procedures to follow if they are worried about a pupil's welfare. Leaders follow up concerns appropriately with outside agencies. They persist in their approaches until they are sure that families have the support they need and pupils are safe.
- Staff maintain the record of safeguarding meticulously. All staff and volunteers undergo rigorous checks to ensure that they are safe to work with pupils. The school seeks equal assurance from outside contractors that their processes for recruitment are thorough.
- Governors support school leaders by maintaining a good oversight of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- There are strict behaviour guidelines for pupils when using the swimming pool. Leaders make sure that regular checks are made on the pool's safety. Governors acknowledge that the use of the pool requires stringent health and safety procedures and recognise the need to review policies regularly.
- All parents spoken to or who responded to the online survey, Parent View, believed their children were safe and well looked after in school. All would recommend the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have brought about consistently good teaching. Teachers challenge pupils of all levels of ability in their learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
- Teachers' explanations are clear because their knowledge of the curriculum is good.

They check regularly to ensure that all pupils understand. They are skilled at explaining concepts in different ways until pupils' learning is secure and pupils are confident in beginning their tasks.

- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. All staff take responsibility for ensuring that pupils with SEND, and those who are disadvantaged, are fully engaged in the learning. Teachers and teaching assistants give these pupils good guidance and help them to succeed.
- If pupils need to catch up in aspects of their learning or need help to reach the higher standards, the school uses additional teaching to increase their progress. These sessions focus on gaps in individual pupils' understanding and provide pupils with further practice of new skills.
- The most able pupils are particularly enthused by the teaching of mathematics. They respond well to regular opportunities to apply their knowledge to solve problems. However, teachers do not sufficiently insist that pupils explain their thinking clearly or set out their working systematically. This limits pupils' ability to check their accuracy. These skills are not yet well developed for pupils across the school.
- Pupils apply their knowledge of mathematics in other subjects. For example, pupils in upper key stage 2 designed a sundial as part of their learning about space. They divided up the face of the sundial accurately using a protractor to measure the angles. Teachers now successfully deepen pupils' learning in this way across the school.
- Pupils write frequently for different purposes across the curriculum. For instance, following their visit to a monkey sanctuary, pupils in lower key stage 2 expressed their views on endangered species through strongly worded letters. At times, teachers do not sufficiently stress the importance of accurate writing. They do not hold pupils sufficiently accountable for the accuracy of their spelling or the quality of their handwriting. Pupils' carelessness in their writing limits their achievement at the higher standard.
- Pupils in Year 1 and the Reception class acquire phonics knowledge quickly. They learn to read confidently. Across the school, teachers build pupils' good skills in inferring and explaining the key points of the information they are reading. Teachers stress to pupils the importance of reading widely. They maintain a close watch on pupils' personal reading. If pupils have read too little or continually read the same type of book, teachers spot this quickly and guide pupils to broaden their reading.
- The teaching of history and science is particularly strong. Teachers increase pupils' understanding in science through setting them a broad range of interesting investigations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils enjoy their learning. Consideration of pupils' welfare is at the heart of all the school does. Pupils and parents recognise this. One parent typically expressed this view by

writing: 'I have been impressed by the opportunities, support, challenges and encouragement all the teachers have provided for my children.'

- The school explains pupils' rights to them but also helps them to understand their responsibilities to others. They are taught, for example, that they have a right to choose their friends but that they also have a responsibility to be friendly.
- A relatively high proportion of pupils join classes across the school mid-year. Staff and other pupils quickly help them to settle in.
- Staff are mindful of pupils' future health and well-being. Pupils enjoy frequent opportunities to take vigorous exercise, including walking the 'daily mile'. Equally, pupils learn how to stay focused and calm through lessons in massage.
- Pupils successfully learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Older pupils take their responsibilities as leaders seriously. Through their leadership, they help other children to engage well in playtimes and assembly.
- Pupils are proud of their work but do not always set it out or check it for accuracy as well as they could.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. In lessons, pupils concentrate on their work and are highly attentive to their teachers. In the playground, pupils of all ages play well together and share equipment safely.
- Pupils work well together and show respect for the opinions of others. They have confidence that staff will support them if they need it.
- Pupils and their parents are positive about the standard of behaviour in school. Pupils say that, sometimes, friends fall out but quickly make up their differences. One pupil expressed this by saying, 'If we see that we have offended someone, we apologise.'
- The current level of attendance is good. Very few pupils are persistently absent. Leaders are quick to follow up absences to ensure that pupils are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress across key stage 2 has improved in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, pupils across the school are making good progress in all three subjects. This can be seen from their workbooks and from the school's latest assessments.
- Pupils are keen readers and read regularly. Teachers have been effective in encouraging pupils to broaden the range of their reading. As a result, pupils make particularly strong progress in reading. They acquire phonics skills early and become confident readers. Pupils go on to develop a deeper understanding of what they read. Improved teaching this year has strengthened pupils' comprehension skills and achievement in reading, and more are now on track to reach the higher standard.

- Pupils apply their knowledge of writing effectively across a range of subjects. They compose well-constructed pieces of writing, using interesting vocabulary. However, at times, pupils' writing is not accurate enough. They do not apply what they know about spelling patterns or maintain the consistency and quality of their handwriting.
- Most pupils work confidently in mathematics and make good progress in calculation, solving problems and tackling mathematical investigations. However, some pupils do not set out their work clearly enough. This restricts them from checking their accuracy and deepening their understanding.
- Pupils with SEND, some of whom are disadvantaged, make strong progress. Pupils' current standard of work shows that an increasing proportion of pupils with SEND are catching up to the expected level for their age.
- Teachers develop pupils' knowledge in science and history particularly well. As a result, pupils make good progress, particularly in the skills of scientific enquiry. They explain their understanding of their history topics clearly through their interesting writing.
- The school has strengthened pupils' achievement across the curriculum and, consequently, pupils are well placed to transfer to the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader for the early years has put in place challenging teaching and learning in the Reception class, across all areas of the curriculum. As a result, children in the early years make good progress.
- When children start school, staff ensure that they gain a deep understanding of what children know and can do. They plan activities which are well matched to children's needs. The majority of children now achieve well, and an increasing proportion reach higher standards than expected in their learning by the end of their Reception Year.
- Children form their letters accurately and apply their phonics knowledge when they write. Staff are aware that this is a challenge for some children, for example children with SEND. They take particular care and time to encourage and develop these children's writing.
- Staff build children's confidence, independence and love of the natural world. Children explore and investigate the setting's wooded outdoor area. They cooperate in their play to build and dig. Staff develop children's curiosity in the world around them through activities such as their recent investigation into the life cycle of a butterfly. Children consequently achieve well in knowledge of the world and developing relationships.
- Children routinely develop and apply their basic skills of reading, writing and number outside and find natural materials to use in their learning. For instance, when ordering and matching numbers, some children chose to use sticks from the woodpile. Others dug for 'buried' pebbles. Children maintained their interest and enthusiasm for these tasks. Staff enhanced children's learning with questions and prompts.
- Staff maintain good routines to secure children's welfare. Children are encouraged to think about their safety and to act sensibly. They behave well and work with

concentration. Children's work shows that they develop good basic skills and attitudes to learning.

- Parents are highly complimentary about the teaching in the Reception class. They value the way that staff know their children as individuals.

School details

Unique reference number	113799
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10088296

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Campbell
Headteacher	Kathy McCann
Telephone number	01935 83287
Website	www.sticklands.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@sticklands.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 February 2017

Information about this school

- Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are four classes. Children join the school in the Reception class. The other classes are mixed age.
- The school has a very wide rural catchment area and the majority of pupils travel on buses to and from the school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND in some classes is very high. Across the school, it is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Almost all pupils are from a White British background.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other key leaders. The inspector made visits to all classrooms to observe pupils' learning. Most of the visits to classes were with the headteacher.
- The inspector reviewed the information the school holds about pupils' progress. She examined samples of pupils' work from across the curriculum.
- Together with the headteacher, the inspector reviewed the school's self-evaluation and school development plan.
- The inspector met with a group of governors. She also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised various school documents, including records of monitoring and the minutes of governors' meetings. The inspector also reviewed documentation in relation to the school's safeguarding procedures. She discussed safeguarding with governors and members of staff.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and reviewed samples of their work with them. The inspector heard pupils read as part of the visits to classes.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils to gain their views of the school. She also talked to pupils in the playground.
- Parents shared their views of the school through the 37 responses recorded on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspector also took account of the five letters handed to her. She spoke to parents at the start of the first day of the inspection.
- The inspector took the views of staff into account through the 10 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
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