



Staplehurst School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118313
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280291
Inspection dates 11 May 2006 to 12 May 2006
Reporting inspector Don Mason AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Gybbon Rise
School category	Community		Staplehurst
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Tonbridge, Kent TN12 0LZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01580 891765
Number on roll	396	Fax number	01580 891291
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr C Hynes
Date of previous inspection	2 February 2004	Headteacher	Mrs A Bolt

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	11 May 2006 - 12 May 2006	280291

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and almost 90% are White British. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. The previous inspection in February 2004 found that the school had serious weaknesses. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2004 and there have been a number of staff changes since then.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory and improving and it gives satisfactory value for money. Due to the strong leadership of the headteacher, strong support from the local authority, the effectiveness of senior managers and the work of all staff in developing their areas of responsibility, the issues raised in the last inspection report have been remedied. Its capacity for improvement is good. These judgements reflect the school's own view of its performance.

Provision and achievement in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory with strengths in creative development and in pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Standards in English, mathematics and science are average representing an improvement on the situation previously when standards and achievement in Years 3 to 6 were judged to be unsatisfactory. There are indications that further improvements will be seen in the results of the national tests in 2006. Methods of checking pupils' progress are now more effective than they were. This information is being used in teachers' planning, which provides more effective support, at an earlier stage, for pupils of all abilities. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and improving, particularly in writing. Pupils are more enthusiastic about their writing and beginning to produce work of higher quality. The good personal development is reflected in most pupils making good efforts and behaving well. A satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a wide range of popular extra activities. The leadership and management of the school is now good as reflected by the progress that has been made in all areas of school life. The governors continue to provide very good support for the school and now have the procedures in place to become an effective partner in the school's desire to perform as well as it can.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to work to improve the quality of assessment and methods to check progress to ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve the best they are capable of.
- Ensure that the improvement measures, which have resulted in a more effective school, are applied consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement and standards have improved and are now satisfactory. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall and pupils make good progress in their personal and social development and in developing the skills of independent learning. Following the last inspection report, the school set itself the challenging target to raise standards of attainment to at least satisfactory level. Despite the many difficulties the school faced at the time, it has succeeded. In the 2005 national tests, standards at the end of Year 2 were average, an improvement on the previous two years. However, standards and achievement at the end of Year 6 remained significantly below average but at that stage the new headteacher had been in post

for only two terms. Her appointment has had a positive impact and pupils' achievement and standards are now satisfactory. Improvement measures, which have been introduced, are now having a significant impact on raising standards particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and are keen to do their best. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with learning difficulties. As a result of improved assessment and checking arrangements, the school now sets appropriate yet challenging targets and its monitoring of progress towards reaching them is more effective.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good personal development is reflected in the way that pupils speak with enthusiasm about their school, saying how much they enjoy their lessons and the wide variety of activities available to them. Children settle in very well to the Reception classes, quickly growing in independence. Behaviour is good, although a few pupils in one Year 3 class lack self-discipline, which occasionally disrupts the learning of others. Attendance levels are consistently above average, which is good. Pupils contribute positively to community events both in and out of school. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.

Pupils respond well to the opportunities they receive to express feelings and show empathy with others. All pupils are growing in self-esteem and are particularly proud when they win stars or the 'Oscar' for good attitudes and achievement. The School Council gives pupils a voice in decision making but would be more effective if the pupils were able to elect officers and to take charge of meetings themselves with the support of a member of staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and speak sensibly about such issues as road safety and "stranger danger". Should they be worried about any matter they know they have adults they trust to advise them. Pupils are enthusiastic about keeping healthy. They participate in a wide range of sports and understand what constitutes a healthy diet. Much to their delight and that of staff involved, the school rugby team has just received the "Fair Play" award. The satisfactory progress in their literacy, numeracy and computer skills and their increasing independence in learning will serve pupils well in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall reflecting pupils' satisfactory progress. The good teaching in the Foundation Stage is particularly effective in stimulating the pupils' interest, developing their creativity and promoting their personal development.

Throughout the school lessons are well structured and focus on developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, which results in pupils who generally behave well and display positive attitudes towards

their learning. The well trained teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties so that they achieve success. Gifted and talented pupils are identified but sometimes their work is too easy. Where teaching is most effective, teachers involve pupils actively in the lesson ensuring they understand the objectives and can talk about what they have learnt. In a particularly effective Year 1 numeracy lesson, pupils' understanding of 'directional language' was well illustrated by colourful potato prints showing quarter and half turns. Outside, the teacher worked with higher attaining pupils helping them to lead each other through a complicated maze using 90 and 180 degree turns. Occasionally, teaching is less effective because the pace and challenge do not hold pupils' interest and the lesson is not managed as well as it might be. Teachers now use assessment information well to provide tasks that match the ability of different groups of pupils. However, some inconsistencies remain in marking and in the use of learning targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. All subjects now have coordinators who are developing ways to improve provision in all subjects. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly and is now satisfactory. The satisfactory and improving provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT and the pupils' good personal development mean that pupils are increasingly well prepared for their future lives. The curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of well supported activities, but there are fewer opportunities for younger pupils. The wide range of high quality learning experiences in the Foundation Stage has been maintained. The curriculum tasks for pupils with learning difficulties are better matched to their needs in English and numeracy than in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall the care, guidance and support is satisfactory but some aspects are better. The improving assessment systems give teachers more accurate information about the progress of all pupils. In most classes pupils use their group or class targets to judge how well they are doing and what they need to do to get better. The task now is to refine these targets so that they meet the needs of individual pupils more precisely. Pupils with learning difficulties are given good support. The quality of care is effective due to good relationships with staff and pupils feel they have someone to turn to should they have any concerns. Vulnerable children are well supported so they can achieve just as well as their peers. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are rigorous and staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe from harm whilst in the school's care.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management are reflected in the effective way the school has improved from one with serious concerns to one that now offers a satisfactory education for the pupils and is improving. Under the very strong leadership of the headteacher the school continues to confront the issues raised in the last inspection report and is determined to raise standards and improve the school's performance. Senior staff appreciate the trust placed in them by the headteacher. They welcome the training opportunities and provide strong support for the headteacher as they seek to raise standards in their subjects. The school's self-evaluation is good and there is a clear, well structured plan in place for further development and improvement. The school is managed well and there is an atmosphere of calm purposefulness. The school has good links with outside agencies especially with the local authority which has strongly supported its efforts to raise standards. The majority of parents' responses to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive but a few of those who responded, disagreed about the school seeking their views and taking them into account. The governors have supported the school well in the difficult period since the last inspection. Its improved procedures have put it in a strong position to support the school in moving forward.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to representatives from each of your classes who told us what they liked about school and why they enjoyed their lessons. Thank you for being so helpful and friendly.

What your school does well:

At the time of the last inspection, the inspectors were worried about a number of things. We do not have these concerns because the headteacher and all the adults in school have worked really hard to sort them out.

Teachers have been thinking a lot about the way they teach you to make sure that you all make the best progress that you can.

Most of you behave well, told us that you enjoy school and said that the teachers make your lessons interesting.

You told us that you feel safe in school, that the adults look after you well and that they will help you if you have any worries.

What we have asked your school to do now:

Keep working to improve the way they check the progress you are making in your work so that you all do the very best that you can.

Make sure that the improvements, which have made your school better, are carried out in the same way in every class.

We believe that your school will go from strength to strength and we wish you all the very best for the future.