



Stalbridge CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113899
Local Authority Dorset
Inspection number 289763
Inspection dates 22–23 January 2007
Reporting inspector Martin James

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stalbridge
School category	Community		Sturminster Newton
Age range of pupils	4–11		DT10 2LP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01963 362487
Number on roll (school)	204	Fax number	01963 363996
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Helen Hedditch
		Headteacher	Laura Turner
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stalbridge Church of England Primary School is similar in size to most primary schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and all pupils are fluent in English. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average, and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly similar to that seen nationally. Children enter Reception with a wide range of ability levels, but overall their attainment is in line with that found nationally.

As a result of a number of senior staff leaving during the last year, an acting headteacher, who is the substantive deputy headteacher, and acting deputy headteacher were in post during the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, where pupils make exceptional progress. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy school and their behaviour and attitudes to work are exemplary. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's care, support and guidance for its pupils are also of the highest order. In particular pupils are provided with thoughtful and very detailed advice on how to improve their work, and this allows them to have a very clear awareness of how to tackle any weaknesses they might have.

Standards are high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. When children start in Reception their knowledge and skills are broadly as expected for their age. During their time in Reception they achieve well, reaching, and sometimes exceeding, the goals set for them. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2, with the result that standards at the end of Year 2 are above average. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are high, with mathematics being a particular strength, and this shows outstanding overall achievement.

The excellent teaching is the key to pupils' progress. Teachers have the highest expectations of them, and continually challenge them to develop their work still further. The very detailed assessment of pupils' work clearly identifies the 'next steps' to be taken, and the work provided, sometimes in small groups, has a very significant impact on pupils' ability to achieve high standards.

The good curriculum contributes well to both pupils' enjoyment of school and to their learning. The curriculum in Reception is now better planned and organised than at the time of the previous inspection, although the school recognises the need to improve the outdoor facilities to ensure the children progress well in all aspects of their physical development. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is interesting and varied, and in particular helps to make pupils very aware of the need to follow a healthy lifestyle. The school makes good links between subjects, and the initiative to make more use of these subjects to help develop writing skills has already had a significant impact on raising standards.

The acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and other senior members of staff are a dedicated and passionate team, providing outstanding leadership and management, and are totally committed to doing the best they can for their pupils. Self-evaluation is effective in pinpointing where improvement is needed to move the school forward. For instance, the lower standards being achieved by some boys in writing were noted, and remedial measures were rapidly, and very successfully, put in place. Governors support the school well, and are currently working to develop their monitoring role. The improvements that have recently been made, the quality of provision currently being provided and the improvements made since the previous inspection all show that the school has outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor facilities for children in Reception.

- Further develop the governors' role in monitoring the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards overall are high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. During their time in Reception, children make good progress, and they reach and sometimes exceed the early learning goals, although some aspects of their physical development are restricted by the limited outdoor facilities. In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to achieve well and, by the end of Year 2, standards are above, and often well above, average.

By the end of Year 6, standards are high, with pupils having made exceptional overall progress as they move through the school, especially in mathematics. Standards in English improved significantly in 2006, but whilst girls attained high standards and achieved highly, a small minority of boys did not perform so well. The school quickly identified this weakness in other year groups as well, and addressed it rigorously through, for example, changes that have been made to the curriculum and very clear targets to help boys improve their work. Current evidence shows that standards in English in Year 6 are very high, with boys now matching girls in their performance.

The school makes outstanding provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and this enables them to make exceptional progress to their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they love coming to school, as shown by their good attendance, and they have mature attitudes to their work. Pupils are courteous and polite, and the quality of relationships is very good. Pupils clearly feel safe in school, and they say that bullying is not a problem. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. In school, pupils readily carry out a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities, and the school council has helped initiate improvements, for example, to playground resources. Pupils are actively engaged in raising funds for charity, and the school choir performs in local events.

Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to live healthy lives, and they benefit from the many opportunities provided by the school for exercise, such as 'Wake and Shake'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, they have a very strong sense of right and wrong. The school very successfully develops in its pupils a range of personal skills such as confidence and independence, as well as high standards in literacy and numeracy. This is preparing them very well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding, leading to high standards and excellent achievement. Staff have been invigorated by the recent challenges of changing the year groups they teach, with teachers and support staff working very effectively together. Classrooms are happy places, and pupils say, 'Teachers make lessons fun.' Teachers provide very well-targeted challenge for more-able pupils and proper support for others where necessary. Additional small-group work, often undertaken by senior staff, also has a major positive impact on pupils' progress.

Teachers' ongoing assessment of pupils' work is a particular strength, resulting in pupils' excellent understanding about how to improve. Their involvement as learners in self-assessment is exemplary. Planning is very good, providing tasks well matched to pupils' interests and competences. Pupils therefore progress exceptionally well in their academic work and become responsible, mature young people when they move on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of pupils. In Reception, a good variety of activities and experiences, together with a good balance between independent learning and more teacher-directed tasks, contributes well to both the children's enjoyment and their learning. However, the outdoor learning area is limited, restricting this aspect of provision. In Years 1 to 6, good planning in individual subjects has contributed well to pupils' achievement. For example, the careful tracking of pupils' progress results in a good match of work to their individual needs. The curriculum is enlivened because of good links made between subjects, and the current strong emphasis on developing writing skills in subjects such as history is having a very beneficial effect on the overall standards. The provision of French further enhances the range of activities on offer.

Extra-curricular provision is extensive, providing many well-supported opportunities outside lessons. Many of these ensure that pupils have an exceptional understanding about fitness and health. Good use is also made of visits and visitors when the opportunity arises.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, with staff being highly committed to ensuring the best possible academic and personal progress for all pupils. Learning environments are safe, as well as stimulating. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust, with potential risks properly assessed.

Exemplary practice exists in all aspects of assessing pupils' learning and progress. Teachers help pupils negotiate their targets sensibly, and they understand clearly how to reach them. This is a major factor in their outstanding achievement because they develop excellent insight into their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils of all abilities can therefore contribute an unusually strong element of self-assessment, which they use very effectively to move themselves forward in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The acting headteacher leads with enthusiasm, expertise and a very strong commitment to improvement. She has contributed very significantly to the outstanding provision that is now made for pupils. Having taken over a school that had lost three senior members of staff, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, she quickly established a new senior leadership team with a view to taking the school forward. Together with other staff members, there is a shared and clear sense of purpose, to further improve both the provision for the pupils, and the achievement they make.

The school has good systems for finding out how well it is doing, including seeking the views of parents. Most parents in turn speak highly of the school, although a small minority feel that communication with the school could be improved. Self-review accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. For example, actions to remedy the performance of some pupils in English were a direct result of such evaluation. The school's overall view of itself was initially cautious, but having only very recently received data relating to the school's latest national test results, the school accurately and correctly reviewed its own judgements at the start of the inspection.

The subject leaders for literacy and numeracy demonstrate a very clear understanding of the strengths in their subjects, and they have actively initiated and supported strategies for making improvements. The particularly high standards in mathematics, and the rapid improvements in English, particularly amongst boys, illustrate this well. Governance is good, with the governors being fully involved, for example, in producing the school development plan. They are currently developing their role in monitoring various aspects of the school's work.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, and we were very interested in what you had to tell us. I am very pleased to tell you that you are in an excellent school, where you do exceptionally well with your work. I am writing to tell you what else we found out about your school, what we think is particularly good, and what we think needs to be made better.

Here are some of the highlights:

- Your acting headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants work hard with you, and help you to produce work of the highest standard.
- Thanks to your teachers' help, you know exactly what you need to do to make your work better still.
- Your behaviour is excellent, and you help to make the school a happy place.
- You are sensible and thoughtful about making decisions on how to improve your school.
- You really enjoy all the extra activities the school provides, especially the 'Wake and Shake' in the mornings!
- You know all about how important it is to eat healthy food and take exercise.

We also found a small number of things to make the school even better. This means we have asked the school to:

- Improve the outside play area for children in the Reception class.
- Arrange for the people who are called school governors to visit the school regularly to see how it is getting on.

We wish you good luck for the future.