



Stone Cross School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114484
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 289932
Inspection date 23 January 2007
Reporting inspector David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Adur Drive
School category	Community		Stone Cross
Age range of pupils	4-11		Pevensey BN24 5EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01323 461002
Number on roll (school)	422	Fax number	01323 461003
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	K Saxby
		Headteacher	Anne Allison
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school on the outskirts of Pevensey and Eastbourne. It serves the immediate local area but with some pupils coming from further afield. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to the national average. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is low and very few pupils have English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, a new information and communication technology (ICT) suite was being constructed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. The personal development and well-being of pupils are exemplary. The headteacher, supported by the senior management team, has a very clear understanding about how the school can continue to move forward effectively. The right changes are being made to ensure this happens.

The consistently good teaching, with examples in individual lessons that are outstanding, means pupils make strong progress from the Reception Year to Year 6. Pupils start school with standards generally in line with those expected for their age. Good provision in the Reception Year ensures that pupils enter Year 1 having achieved, and in some cases exceeded, the goals expected. By Year 6, standards are above the national average in English, mathematics and science and achievement is good. The highly effective monitoring of the school's provision, the excellent self-evaluation, and the consequent development to eliminate any relative weaknesses improved the 2006 national test results. The rate of progress between Year 2 and Year 6 is now in the top third in the country.

The school has a clear plan for improving pupils' achievement across a broad range of subjects. For example, progress in ICT, although satisfactory, is not quite as high as in English, mathematics and science because the resources have not been good enough. The new ICT suite and equipment are realistically aimed at solving this problem. The school also recognises the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to use this technology on a regular basis in their work across the subjects.

The good, vibrant and creative curriculum makes real links between the other subjects. Teachers are cleverly developing the key skills needed to improve pupils' specific subject knowledge. For instance, planning for the humanities correctly highlights how writing and mathematics will also be developed. The clear benefits from this were seen in a discussion with older pupils about how they had researched, designed, made and evaluated different shelters. They talked knowledgeably about the strengths and weaknesses of the final products and could refer to calculations and experiments they had written up when testing them.

The excellent care, guidance and support of pupils concentrate not only on their personal development but also on provision of academic guidance. Nearly all questionnaires from parents and all the internal questionnaires indicate that pupils have a real enjoyment of school. Pupils are confident, work hard and happily share ideas. All pupils, even the youngest, are involved in formulating their individual targets and know what they need to do to improve their work.

The good leadership and management, including governance, are sharply focused on maintaining the strengths in the school and sustaining the good outcomes for pupils. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve standards in ICT to match those in other subjects by developing more ways for pupils to use technology regularly across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards because teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of doing. The comprehensive assessment data shows that nearly all make the progress expected of them and significant numbers do better than this. Whilst there are some individual differences, pupils generally start school being able to communicate and mix well with each other. Through the Reception Year, they learn to use their imagination and initiate their play activities such as in the 'post office' and 'fruit shop' role-play areas. They start Year 1 well prepared for more formal work although they are still offered these play opportunities as part of their broader learning.

By the end of Year 2, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are slightly above those expected. Through Years 3 to 6, good and broader learning opportunities mean that standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics, science and in creative subjects, such as art, are above those expected. Displays of pupils' work show many budding artists and designers. Whilst standards are not as high as in some other subjects, three quarters of pupils reach at least average standards in ICT. However, because computers and other technology are not used regularly enough, achievement is prevented from being higher in this area by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. As the chair of governors remarked, 'This is a very civilised school'. The interesting learning opportunities and the outstanding care and welfare of pupils, along with the excellent relationships across the whole school community, mean that pupils thoroughly enjoy school and behave exceptionally well. It is no surprise, therefore, that attendance is consistently above the national average and exclusions are low.

Pupils know how to stay safe and increasingly adopt healthy lifestyles such as in their choices of meals. They take responsibilities very seriously. Pupils in Key Stage 2, for example, were involved in deciding the content of their own cross-curricular work, with a budget of £30 for buying seeds and compost. Involvement in many activities of this type prepares pupils successfully for their future lives. There are many ways in which pupils are involved with local, national and international issues. These include filling in questionnaires about life in East Sussex, help with Eastbourne Youth Radio and a link with a school in Tanzania.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because teaching is consistently good through all years. Teachers always explain what is to be learnt and why, which ensures pupils understand the relevance of the lesson. In addition, they assess pupils' work regularly and alter their lessons in light of this. Planning highlights both specific knowledge and more general learning. In individual lessons, the exemplary teaching is characterised by an even sharper focus on developing this learning to the highest possible level. For instance, in one Year 6 English lesson, the very appropriate questioning, aimed at much older pupils, really challenged pupils to think hard about the text they were studying. In ICT, teachers follow the national guidelines well, in the main by using whole-class lessons. Unfortunately, because there are only a relatively small number of classroom computers, it means that it is difficult for individual pupils to follow up this work regularly. As a result, pupils have good skills in presentation, word processing and research but are not used to using technology on a day-to-day basis for more advanced activities. Forward planning for the new computer suite is set to remedy this problem.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum, while constantly being developed, already has a number of outstanding features. By making realistic connections between subjects and skills, the school is ensuring that pupils make progress on a broad range of fronts. For example, it was recognised that little use was being made of the local area and so a study of the Battle of Hastings has been introduced, with pupils making a tapestry and studying its historical relevance. In addition, there are many extra-curricular activities including those for sport, art and drama, and gifted and talented sessions for those who show higher potential. The school has now rightly prioritised the need to make sure that these many approaches are securely embedded and developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are excellent. Personal development is taken very seriously, with a high priority given to meeting the needs of all pupils, and particularly supporting those who are vulnerable. The school has balanced the attention to pupils' personal welfare with high quality academic guidance. This is accomplished at a whole-school level by analysing trends in the performance of different groups. Individual pupils are supported very well through target-setting as well as ongoing support in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There are a number of outstanding aspects evident within the good leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy head have a particularly clear understanding of how to develop from being a good to an outstanding school. They have very sensibly evaluated new initiatives to ensure that they have the best possible impact on the outcomes for pupils. For instance, the development of the new computer suite, which for various reasons had stalled over the past few years, is now coming to fruition. Equally, it is also recognised that this has taken too long and has affected pupils' progress. The school is sharply focused on developing pupils who are well prepared for their future lives and have the necessary basic skills to achieve this. All staff share the ambition that pupils should be able to think for themselves and work as independently as possible. Initial success can be seen in the rising test results.

The governing body has good expertise, with governors having expertise in finance, health and safety and personnel. From their own analysis and work within the school, they are not afraid to challenge ideas but also provide good support. Self-evaluation is highly effective and demonstrates that the school is not complacent and is moving on.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
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 looking after me so well during my recent visit. I very much enjoyed talking to so many of you and hearing about all the things you do at school. As I promised some of you in Year 6, I have enclosed the main points of the report below.

- Some of you told me how you thought you were at a good school and I agree. In fact, I have also reported that some aspects are outstanding.
- All parents said in recent questionnaires that behaviour is good. However, I think you are exceptionally well behaved and this is confirmed by those of you I spoke to.
- Judging by the way that you made sure I knew all about your work, I know that you all really enjoy school. Your class displays showed me that there a number of budding artists, designers, mathematicians and writers.
- By the time you leave in Year 6, you have achieved good standards and have progressed well. This is because you are taught well; some of your lessons are even outstanding. In some lessons, I could hear a pin drop because you were all concentrating so hard.
- Your teachers really know how to plan activities that will help you to improve. Equally, they want to make sure that you can think for yourselves and are well prepared for your next school. This is why they are trying out some new ideas at the moment.
- It was interesting to hear your views on ICT and how long you have been waiting for the new computer suite. I agree with you that when it is finished, it should help you to do even better as you will be able to use the technology more regularly.
- You are looked after exceptionally well. You do not seem to have any concerns about what to do should you be unhappy or have problems. I was particularly impressed with the way you could talk to me about the targets you have been set and what you need to do to achieve these.
- Your headteacher, along with all the other staff, knows very clearly what to do to make your school one of the best. You can make sure you play your part by working hard and helping your teachers as much as you can.

Finally, I would like to wish you the very best for your future schooling.