



Stone St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 118596
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291182
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hayes Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Horns Cross
Age range of pupils	4–11		Greenhithe DA9 9EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01322 382292
Number on roll (school)	270	Fax number	01322 382405
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Jarvis
		Headteacher	Susan Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006	Inspection number 291182
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school. An above average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, and, although the numbers are not high, the school caters for an increasing number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The headteacher joined the school a year ago, but the sickness of another member of the senior staff has meant that for most of the past year there has not been a full leadership and management team in place. The school is part of the Intensifying Support Programme, which is a national initiative aimed at raising standards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In recent years, standards have been low and pupils have not done as well as they should. Since joining the school last year, the headteacher has been acutely aware of this. Though there have been extended gaps in the school's leadership team due to sickness, the headteacher has put in place an enthusiastic interim team and drawn effectively on good external support, including through the Intensifying Support Programme, to institute a bevy of changes. These have resulted in notable improvements. Teachers now have higher expectations of their pupils' capabilities and the school's records show that teaching has improved. Action taken by the school to chase up absences has been effective so that the previously poor attendance is now close to the national average. Pupils confirm that behaviour, which they say 'used to be really horrible', has improved dramatically, so that they are now happy in school and find it 'a really nice place to be' where they feel safe and secure. In turn, standards are beginning to rise. Though still too low, the Year 6 test results in 2006 were significantly higher than those of the previous two years.

The school has clearly come a long way over the past year, but it still has further to go. It does not yet provide an adequate education for its pupils in order to equip them with the key literacy and numeracy skills they need as they get older. This is because, with such a history of underachievement, the now satisfactory teaching has to be even better before pupils can catch up fully on lost ground. In some classes, lessons could be pacier and more demanding. Generally, pupils are not given enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. The curriculum in the Reception Year is inadequate because it is not planned well enough to help children build steadily on what they learn. As a result, children do not make as much progress as they should in this Foundation Stage of their education. Many of the issues identified in the last inspection four years ago have continued as weaknesses.

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards and achievement of the pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring that teachers set more challenging work so that more is demanded of pupils in lessons.
- Give pupils clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Better match activities to children's needs in the Reception Year so that, step-by-step, they can build on what they learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are rising but they are still too low. Although pupils currently make satisfactory progress in lessons, the school recognises that many have underachieved in the past and they are not all making enough progress to catch up on lost ground. Pupils have done best in Years 1 and 2, where teachers have generally had higher expectations of their pupils' capabilities. As a result, standards by the end of Year 2 are now in line with national expectations, and with more of the able pupils attaining higher levels. The below average standards at the end of the Reception Year show that children have not made as much progress as they should in relation to their below average starting point. This is also true of Years 3 to 6, where boys and girls of all backgrounds and abilities have not done as well as they should. Year 6 test results were notably higher in 2006 than in previous years but they are still well below average and do not represent adequate achievement. Although pupils develop some of the skills necessary for their future economic well-being, such as their use of computers, key literacy and numeracy skills are not strong enough by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory but with several good features. Pupils behave well and are courteous. They enjoy school, describing it as 'colourful and safe' where 'everyone is nice, no one is nasty to you and if you get hurt they will look after you'. They are pleased that good behaviour, as well as good work, are recognised and rewarded, for example, through 'pupil of the week' badges. In lessons, pupils generally work hard and are keen to learn. In some classes, however, where teaching is dull and uninspiring, pupils become bored and listless. Pupils talk confidently about the importance of exercise and healthy diets, and say that, as a result of the school's efforts, they have adopted healthier lifestyles both in and out of school. They have appropriate opportunities to take part in the school community through the school council. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their knowledge and understanding of other cultures is well promoted and is celebrated in displays around the school. Pupils from different cultural backgrounds respect each other. They show concern for the environment and make a satisfactory contribution to the local community. For example, they recorded a Christmas carol for the nearby Bluewater shopping centre.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are improving as a result of the careful monitoring and support of the headteacher. Although there is some good teaching, it is mostly satisfactory

and is not strong enough to bring about the rapid rise in standards that is needed. Teachers are making better use of assessment to check how well pupils are doing. Teachers tell pupils what is expected of them at the start of the lesson. Too often, however, they only outline what pupils will do and not what they are expected to learn. In those lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, the pace of learning is not as brisk as it could be and pupils are not always set challenging enough work. Marking gives pupils insufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school benefits from a spacious and attractive site which offers very good facilities. Many activities on offer in the different subjects involve pupils in enjoyable practical work and recent improvements have begun to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. Teachers make sure that all the nationally recommended topics are covered, but the curriculum is not designed well enough to help children build step-by-step on their skills. This is particularly so in the Reception Year, where activities are rather routine and not enjoyable enough for most children. In science, pupils are still not doing well enough because, as at the time of the last inspection, they have too few opportunities to develop their investigation skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Good attention is given to pupils' welfare and, as a result, pupils are made to feel safe and secure. Child protection procedures are securely in place, and all staff receive suitable training. Careful attention is given to health and safety and formal risk assessments are carried out regularly. There is a weakness, however, in the academic guidance given to pupils. Not all pupils have or know their individual targets and, consequently, many pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory but there are a number of key strengths that lead to demonstrably good capacity to improve the school further. The headteacher is the driving force behind improvements. Her clear direction has already brought about an improvement in standards, significantly improved behaviour and raised attendance. Parents voice their appreciation of the improvements that they have seen. 'Keep up the good work,' said one parent, 'and thank you for making me proud to send my children here.' Nonetheless, a number of uncertainties due to extended absence of senior staff have inevitably slowed progress. A group of supportive senior teachers have helped to overcome these difficulties. Together, this interim leadership team knows very well what needs to be done in the school because they make a number of crucial checks to find out how effective the changes introduced have been. Regular

assessments confirm how well pupils are doing and identify those who are falling behind in their work. The continuous feedback provided for teaching staff is at the root of the improvements in teaching and learning. Well thought out support is given to teachers who have not yet made the necessary changes to their work. There is still much to do to raise the quality of teaching to a level that will reverse the long-standing underachievement that exists in the school. The school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness, with only the school's overall grade differing from that of inspectors.

Governors have not done enough in the past to challenge poor performance. They have benefited from much improved information about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are fully behind the drive to raise standards. However, they are still heavily dependant on the headteacher's guidance and do not yet know how best to plan for further improvement and ensure that the resources provided make a difference to children's learning.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school.

The school is changing for the better but it is not yet doing enough to make sure that you all do as well as you should. We are asking the staff and governors to make some more improvements and we are recommending that the school gets some extra help over the next year.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school:

- The changes made by your headteacher have already helped to improve the school.
- Most of you enjoy school and it is a place where you feel safe.
- You get on well with each other and behaviour is good.

These are the things that we think could be better:

- Teachers need to give many of you more difficult work in lessons.
- It would be helpful if you each had a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work.
- Children in the Reception Year could be given more help to learn from the different play and other activities they do.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.