



South Stoke Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123039
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292565
Inspection date 4 October 2006
Reporting inspector Charalambos Loizou

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Street
School category	Community		South Stoke
Age range of pupils	4-11		Reading RG8 0JS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01491 872948
Number on roll (school)	28	Fax number	01491 872948
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew Goss
		Headteacher	Miss Amanda Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small village primary school and pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. The school is situated in a generally advantaged area. The pupils come from the local village and the surrounding area, including Reading. All the pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below that of most schools. There has been high staff turnover in the last two years. The headteacher teaches for a substantial amount of the time. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times is quite high.

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 provides a satisfactory and improving education. The pupils enjoy school, are well behaved and show good attitudes. They care for each other, maintain strong friendships and look forward to coming to school which is reflected in good attendance rates.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. From an average starting point pupils make satisfactory progress and reach the expected level in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are lower than they should be because the teaching is inconsistent. Consequently, the pupils' handwriting is not always well formed and they make basic errors in punctuation and sentence structure. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress but some of the work provided for them is not challenging or stimulating enough. The absence of outdoor learning for reception children limits their progress in physical and creative development.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some good teaching which accelerates pupils' progress because lessons are well planned with challenging tasks that are closely matched to the pupils' needs and abilities. However, teachers are not checking that the work pupils do builds on what they already know and understand.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their care, guidance and support is satisfactory with some good features. The staff take good care of the pupils and provide good support, including for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is having a positive effect on pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, weaknesses in assessment affect the quality of guidance they receive.

Satisfactory leadership and management has maintained standards and the quality of teaching, despite the high staff turnover. There has been satisfactory progress since the school's last inspection but some weaknesses remain, particularly in relation to writing standards and assessment. There have been good improvements to the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) and teachers' planning is better organised for mixed- age classes. On balance, this track record demonstrates that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further. Governors provide satisfactory management and, with the effective support and advice of the Local Authority, they have improved the organisation of committees. As a result, governors are increasingly involved in systematic monitoring but have not fully developed their strategic role to allow them to hold the school to account for its performance and standards. Both staff and governors have been successful in working with parents and the local community. Consequently, the vast majority of parents are supportive and think highly of the school and the effect it is having on their children. One typically commented how, 'their self-confidence and self-esteem has improved beyond recognition since they became pupils here'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen and improve the teaching of writing and provide more opportunities for pupils to write independently.
- Improve assessment and target setting to accelerate pupils' progress and ensure that they all reach their targets.
- Provide the youngest children with a stimulating and challenging curriculum that meets their needs.
- Ensure that the headteacher and governors monitor lessons and pupils' performance systematically and that governors play a more strategic role in the management of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Children in the Reception year make satisfactory progress in relation to their average starting points. They reach the goals set for the start of Year 1. However, in some lessons, their progress slows when tasks are not stimulating enough or carefully matched to their needs.

Although the number of pupils taking national tests each year is small, and results need to be analysed with care, the school is not setting challenging enough targets. Test results show that more able pupils are not reaching higher levels in writing. Consequently, English standards are lower than those in mathematics and science. Test results in 2006 improved on the previous year but some pupils did not reach their expected, yet modest targets. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are cared for and supported well and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel happy and safe. They take on responsibilities and the special prefects are proud to care for other pupils at break times and act as good role models. Relationships are very good and standards of behaviour are good. The pupils' knowledge of other cultures is satisfactory but limited to traditional festivals and major religions. Attendance rates are good and many pupils say they enjoy school because, as one said, 'It's really easy to make friends'. Older pupils speak eagerly about special parties they organise for younger children, recalling last July's American Independence Day party. Pupils are proud of their school and explain that bullying is rare and dealt with well. They reflect thoughtfully and consider those less fortunate than themselves. They have a good understanding of healthy eating and pupils feel safe from harm or harassment. They understand the importance of exercise and cite swimming as an enjoyable and healthy activity. The school council takes its responsibilities conscientiously and pupils feel they are improving the school because their ideas are taken seriously. The pupils receive

a satisfactory grounding in basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT) skills, which prepare them for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. However, reception children are not always provided with challenging tasks matched to their needs when taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. Good lessons have time limited tasks, a brisk pace and stimulating activities. In a good English lesson, the staff acted the part of the three witches in Macbeth which motivated the pupils to participate in their own role play. In this case, drama was well used to help the pupils plan their own play scripts. However, the teaching of writing is a weakness. Consequently, standards in handwriting and punctuation are not as high as they should be. Teachers' marking, although helpful in supporting the pupils, does not always provide pointers for improvement to handwriting, punctuation and sentence structure. There are inconsistencies in the way teachers use assessment information so the tasks set in lessons do not always build on what pupils already know and understand.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is satisfactory and is having a positive effect on the pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes. The school has improved ICT resources since the last inspection and this has led to improved standards. There are good links made between subjects that make learning practical and enjoyable, for example, when older pupils organised a Roman party to reinforce what they learned in history lessons. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write independently and at length. Reception children do not have enough space to play outdoors which limits their creative and physical development. Educational visits widen pupils' experience although some parents have rightly commented on limited extra-curricular activities. Good use is made of the local area to reinforce pupils' understanding of the countryside and environment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for and those with learning difficulties or disabilities have good support. Systems for tracking the progress of pupils are inconsistent so that targets for some pupils are not high enough. Pupils' progress is not being checked regularly enough to ensure pupils are on course to reach their predicted levels. Good health and safety procedures and regular risk assessments

ensure that the school is safe and secure. This is a good improvement since the school's last inspection. There are robust child protection procedures in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. The vast majority of parents believe their views are valued. The staff have done well to improve the use of ICT and, with the exception of writing, standards are improving. Following the most recent review and advice of the Local Authority, the school has improved monitoring and governance. Consequently, priorities identified in the school's improvement plan have been acted on with measurable improvements to standards and teaching. Increasingly, the staff and governors have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In nearly all respects, they have accurately evaluated the school's effectiveness. New governors are more active in finding out how well the school is doing. Governors' committees are now structured well to provide a focus for governor visits. Monitoring reports by the Local Authority and headteacher show an increasing proportion of good teaching and these evaluations match those of the inspection. Consequently, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to continue moving forward.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

I was pleased to visit your school and write to thank you for your help and for making me feel very welcome.

Your school provides a satisfactory education for you.

I think these are the best things about your school.

- You are well behaved and try hard in lessons.
- You enjoy school and come to school regularly and on time. Your parents are very happy with the school.
- The staff take good care of you and this helps you develop good attitudes.
- Your teachers support you well and give you lots of opportunities to help other pupils.

I have asked your teachers to:

- help you to improve your writing so you can write accurately with more confidence
- keep closer checks on how well you are doing so you all do as well as you can and reach your targets
- give the youngest children in reception more exciting things to do both indoors and outdoors
- work closely with governors to check how well you are all doing.

I wish you all the very best.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos Loizou

Lead inspector