

Stoke Mandeville Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110249
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310238
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Aylett
Headteacher	Mr Graham Hollows
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Lower Road Stoke Mandeville Aylesbury HP22 5XA
Telephone number	01296 612371
Fax number	01296 615038

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stoke Mandeville Combined School is an average sized school in the village of Stoke Mandeville. Currently there are 9 pupils in the school's department for hearing impairment, which serves the northern area of Buckinghamshire Local Authority. Nearly half of all pupils come from outside the immediate catchment area. Few are eligible for a free school meal. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average although there is a higher than usual percentage with a statement of special educational need. Around half of these are related to hearing impairment and the remainder to learning difficulties. Pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Artsmark Silver and the Eco-Schools Bronze awards. The current head teacher was appointed in April 2008 after a period of significant change at senior leadership level. An acting deputy has been in post since September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stoke Mandeville Combined School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school values the individuality of all of its pupils and their personal development is good. Those from the department for hearing impairment make an important contribution to the school community. Almost all parents speak well of the school and make comments such as 'My child comes to school happy every day'.

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. As a result of satisfactory teaching and learning, pupils of different backgrounds and abilities make satisfactory progress. There are examples of good teaching in the school, but there is not enough to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can, particularly in mathematics. Staff are enthusiastic, they plan carefully and make learning fun. They have a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour and lessons proceed smoothly. In some lessons, however, notably in mathematics, staff do not fully challenge all pupils and in these situations pupils' learning is not as good as it should be. Pupils with learning difficulties, including those with hearing impairment, receive a good level of support and achieve the small step learning targets set for them.

The school rightly prides itself on its positive and welcoming ethos. All staff support pupils' personal development well and pupils learn to explore their feelings and respect those of others. Pupils of all ages make good gains in developing their confidence and independence, and their behaviour is very good. In assemblies, all pupils show reverence for times of prayer and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The curriculum ensures suitable development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). It is enhanced with a wide range of enrichment activities, such as residential visits, that play an important part in pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils appreciate the good relationships established with staff and know that they can turn to them if they need support. However, there is some inconsistency in the ways that staff guide pupils' academic development. This means that pupils are not always sufficiently clear what they need to do in order to improve their work.

The overall leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher shows drive and determination. He is well supported by the acting deputy and together, they have the confidence of staff. They have carried out a discerning and analytical review of the school's performance based on a vision that all pupils deserve the best. As a result, senior leaders are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and everyone shows a strong commitment to improving standards. Subject action plans are now more focused because they are driven by challenging targets. However, initiatives to improve pupils' achievements are recent and have not yet had sufficient time to secure improvement in the standards that pupils achieve. Governors visit on a regular basis. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met and they are increasingly developing their role as the school's critical friend. The school is in a position to go forward with confidence.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and this ensures that children make a good start to their school life. By the time they start Year 1, most have attained above the expected levels in all areas of learning. The imaginative way in which staff organise learning means that children are well motivated

by a wide range of purposeful activities; for example the role-play concerned with going on holiday. Very effective use of the outdoors is an important part of the children's good quality of learning. The Foundation Stage leader and the senior team are clear where improvements are most needed in order to improve the provision even further. A key focus is being given to communication, language and literacy, and mathematical learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils of all abilities are fully challenged and achieve as well as they can, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels fully implement recent initiatives to secure improvement in standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average and this represents satisfactory progress and achievement given pupils' overall average starting points on entry. Since the last inspection, the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have been variable. This is linked to differences between year groups and some inconsistency in the quality of teaching. The 2007 results were average overall with English and science being better than mathematics. Consequently, in September 2007 plans were set in motion to improve standards generally and notably those in mathematics. These are starting to pay dividends as evidenced by the above average standards achieved by the current Year 2. Nevertheless, there is still further to go to secure improved standards by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. This is shown by their good attendance. In a wide range of activities, they work successfully as members of a group, show respect for, and are very supportive of each other. A good example of this is the way that all pupils use British Sign Language in support of those with hearing impairment. Pupils say that they make good friends, instances of bullying are rare and they are clear about what they should do if any occurs. They talk knowledgeably about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and the need to adopt safe practices, such as wearing a helmet when cycling to school. They make a very positive contribution to the school and wider community, as is evidenced by their enthusiastic approach to the school's Eco-Schools programme. As pupils move to secondary education, they show good levels of maturity and their satisfactory basic skills provide suitable support for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are well organised, proceed smoothly and staff work well as a team. There is a good working atmosphere in classes based on good

relationships between staff and pupils. Most pupils are keen to contribute their ideas, often showing a good sense of fun. Resources and 'hands-on' activities are used well to engage pupils' interest.

There are examples of good teaching as was seen in lessons in the unit for pupils with hearing impairment and in Year 6. In these, the staff used their detailed knowledge of each pupil's level of understanding to drive forward their achievements. Pupils responded well to the high expectations set and made noticeable improvement in their levels of understanding. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, staff do not make best use of assessment information to challenge pupils to achieve of their best and not all pupils are clear enough about what they have to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory with particular strengths in the wide range of enrichment activities undertaken and in the provision for music and physical education. All of these aspects and the recently introduced curriculum weeks, lead pupils to say 'They're really fun, you work hard but you do not realise how much you are learning'. The school has rightly identified the need to develop better links between different subjects and make more use of ICT across all subjects as aspects of its improvement plan. As yet, there is not a fully systematic development of pupils' key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in different subjects across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are strengths in the support that staff give to pupils' personal development. They put the pupils' needs first, display respect towards them and value their efforts. Pupils know that they have a voice and that the staff will listen to their ideas. A good example is the way the school responded to the pupils' ideas about forming a science club. There are robust child protection and safeguarding procedures. Parents and carers are seen as partners in their children's education and the school works well with them and a wide range of others to support pupils' development. This is a particularly strong feature of the work of the department for pupils with hearing impairment.

The support and guidance for pupils' academic development is satisfactory. Staff assess pupils' progress regularly, and they use this information to set them challenging targets. However, there is inconsistency in the extent to which these are used to ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has a clear vision about wanting the best for every pupil. He has ensured that all staff are aware that they have an important part to play in achieving improvement. He works well with the acting deputy and they have already made noticeable changes, for example by making whole school targets more challenging. By incorporating these into the school improvement plan this is already having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Governors gain information about the school in a range of ways and they challenge the school in aspects of its work, for example about its finances. However, largely because the criteria to judge the

success of the school's performance over time have not been clear enough, governors are not certain that all pupils are doing as well as they should be.

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Annex A

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

17 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stoke Mandeville Combined School, Aylesbury, HP22 5XA

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school. We particularly enjoyed and valued the discussions we held with you. You told us that pupils are well behaved and you make good friends. We were glad to hear that you really enjoy school and were impressed with the ways in which you help others. We agree that you get a lot of support from staff so that you quickly gain confidence and your behaviour is very good. It is also clear that staff care for you well.

The headteacher and his acting deputy know that you get a satisfactory education. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and, with all staff, are keen to see it improve further. We have asked them to work with the staff to make sure that, in all lessons, teachers fully challenge every one of you so that you all achieve as well as you can, especially in mathematics. Also, we have asked them to make sure everyone puts in place recent plans so that standards in the school improve. You can help by trying your hardest at all times.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector