

Stanford Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114376
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311575
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bridget Allen
Headteacher	Giovanni Franceschi
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
School address	Stanford Road Brighton BN1 5PR
Telephone number	01273 565570
Fax number	01273 566031

Age group	7–11
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Inspection number	311575

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

- the boys' achievement in English
- the pupils' behaviour, their attendance and their enjoyment of school
- the use of assessment information by teachers to plan lessons
- the breadth and balance in the curriculum
- the quality of care provided for pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels.

Evidence was gathered from interviews with staff and pupils, lesson observations and analysis of documents, including parents' and carers' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence indicating that the school's own assessments, in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Stanford Junior is larger than most primary schools and serves a socially advantaged area. The majority of pupils are White British and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with national averages, with speech and language difficulties forming the most significant area of need. The headteacher joined the school two years ago and the deputy headteacher joined at the start of this academic year. The school buildings are used by a private provider of after-school club and holiday activities which are reported on separately as they are not managed by the governing body of the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stanford Junior is a good school which has improved well since the last inspection. The pupils now make excellent academic progress because of the highly effective teaching they receive. This is appreciated by the majority of parents and carers, who think the school does a good job. A typical comment came from one who has 'had three children attending the school over the past years', noting that 'it has improved greatly'. The school provides a calm and purposeful environment for learning in which pupils behave exceptionally well and where most are very happy. However, a significant minority of parents, carers and pupils feel that in Year 6 there is an overemphasis on preparing for national assessment tests, and that the pupils do not always get the care they need to cope with the resulting pressure.

Standards on entry are above average. The progress made by pupils in English, mathematics and science has accelerated consistently over the last three years and is now outstanding. Standards, as measured in national assessment tests, are significantly above average by the end of Year 6 and the school meets challenging targets. A notable improvement in the performance of more able pupils in recent years means that they now exceed the levels expected for their ages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make progress in line with their peers. The school has worked hard to ensure that boys and girls make equally good progress, and this has been successful in mathematics and science. The girls outperform the boys in English, most notably in writing, although here too the gap is narrowing.

The improvements in achievement derive from better teaching, which is now outstanding. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it very well to plan engaging activities which meet pupils' varying needs. Many lessons involve excellent discussion, often prompted by effective use of interactive whiteboards or other stimulating starting points. For example, a Year 6 class were enthusiastic when talking together about writing instructions for mummification following a visit from museum staff to the school. Improved tracking of pupils' progress over time in English, mathematics and science means that underachievement is identified and tackled early, including through booster classes or individual support. The school is extending these tracking procedures to other subjects across the curriculum. Help for pupils with additional learning needs such as for speech and language is targeted carefully, and additional adults make a strong contribution to pupils' progress.

The majority of pupils enjoy school and attend very regularly. The school is highly effective in supporting pupils' social and moral development so that most behave very well and enjoy positive relationships with each other. They are confident and articulate in discussions and collaborative tasks, forming a harmonious community. Messages about how to lead healthy lives are reinforced through the curriculum and the wide range of extra-curricular activities, many of which are sport-related. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, for example through the school council, but feel they could do even more to take on responsibilities.

The curriculum places a strong focus on basic skills in mathematics, English and science, with dividends evident in pupils' achievement. Some pupils in Year 6 feel they concentrate too much on these subjects as they approach assessment tests and this reduces their enjoyment of learning. Where pupils are able to work on a broader curriculum they thoroughly enjoy their learning. They respond very positively to enrichment, such as when working with artists for the 'open house' exhibition or visiting places of interest like museums. Some good steps have been

taken to make links between subjects and tailor the themes covered so as to engage pupils' interest. Nevertheless the curriculum does not sustain some pupils' interest, particularly in their final year, and links between subjects are not always planned systematically enough to ensure that pupils progressively develop their learning in the subjects involved.

The pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. The school promotes community cohesion well. It has a good awareness of the specific needs of its pupils and the local community, and ensures that pupils build a good awareness of a range of faiths and cultures, although it has identified that it could do more to reflect the minority ethnic heritages of some of its pupils and to give all pupils a better understanding of the multicultural nature of this country and the world beyond. Pupils are prepared well, both academically and socially, for the next stage in their education. They have some opportunities to experience the world of work through meeting people who do particular jobs and there are good plans to give pupils a more systematic exposure to commercial and enterprise activities.

The school provides good overall care for pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, including checking adults who have contact with them, are secure. Arrangements for transition into Year 3 are seen as a strength by parents and carers. Vulnerable pupils are supported well and pupils' personal development is monitored carefully. The school is effective in reducing the number of pupils regularly missing school so there are very few with low attendance. Good links with external agencies such as social services, the local cluster group of schools and local authority staff help support pupils. Most staff provide high levels of care but a significant minority of Year 6 pupils and their parents and carers feel there is sometimes a lack of sensitivity toward them from a minority of staff, associated in particular with the pressure of preparing for national assessment tests.

Academic guidance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is excellent. Marking is regular and useful, and pupils feel well informed as to what to do next. Older pupils are thoroughly involved in deciding how to improve their work in these subjects for themselves, and good progress is being made in extending this effective practice into younger year groups and a wider range of subjects.

Good leadership and management are built on a foundation of high expectations and challenge provided by the headteacher. He has taken good steps to get more staff involved in leading areas of the school's work, thereby securing good capacity for further improvement. The school development plan sets out demanding goals for pupils' academic and personal development. Resources and staff training are managed well to support the school's priorities. The headteacher and governors monitor the school's performance well. They have an accurate overall view of the progress the school is making and prompt action is usually taken when progress is too slow. However, the concerns voiced by some parents and pupils over the quality of care in Year 6 indicate a need to check that agreed approaches are consistently adopted by all staff and that the school is active in responding to such concerns.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the curriculum gives increased emphasis to areas other than English, mathematics and science in Year 6, and that the links between subjects in all years are systematically planned to develop pupils' learning in the subjects involved.
- Ensure that agreed approaches to the care of pupils are adhered to by all staff so that all pupils feel well supported in meeting challenging academic goals.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stanford Junior School, Brighton BN1 5PR

This letter is to thank you for your help when I came to inspect your school recently and to give you a summary of the inspection outcomes.

Stanford Junior is a good school and some areas of its work are outstanding.

- You make very good progress in your work and reach standards which are well above those achieved by most pupils of your age by the time you leave. This sets you up well for secondary school and for later life.
- The teachers work very hard to help you make such good progress. They check carefully to see how you are all getting on with your work and are very good at giving more help when it is needed. You told me the teachers ask you to think hard about how you can improve your work yourselves and that this is useful.
- Your behaviour at school is usually very good. I was impressed by how polite you were and how keen you were to talk about your school as well as to make the most of your time in lessons.
- Most of you enjoy school and attend very well. You told me you like many of the lessons, especially where you have interesting and fun things to do such as in science week or making work for the artists' open house exhibition. Some older pupils said some lessons were less interesting and they felt under too much pressure when preparing for tests in English, mathematics and science.
- You told me that the teachers and other staff are usually good at helping you if you have any concerns. You also said you were made to feel very welcome when you joined the school and the staff helped you settle in well.
- The school does a good job in making sure you understand how to lead a healthy life by eating well and taking exercise and the opportunities you have to take part in sport really help with this.
- There are a good number of ways for you to take on responsibilities in the school, although some of you said you would like to do more of this.

Although the headteacher and the staff already have a lot of ideas about how to improve the school further, I have asked them to include the following in their plans:

- To make sure your learning remains interesting right through into Year 6, and to check that whilst the school helps you do your best in things like assessment tests, you do not feel under too much pressure.

Thanks again for your help during the inspection and good luck in the future.

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector